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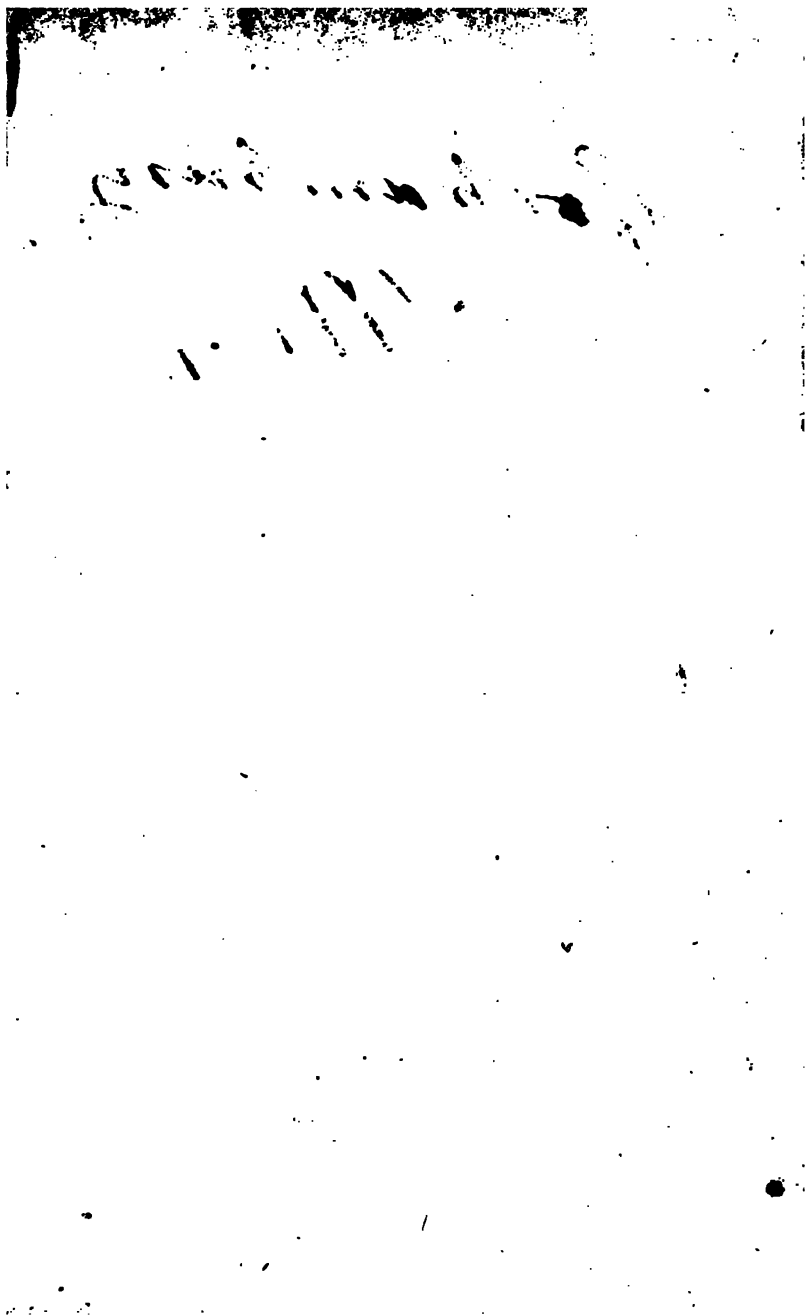
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AN  
ANSWER  
TO THE  
Dissenters Pleas  
FOR  
SEPARATION;  
OR, AN  
ABRIDGMENT  
OF THE  
LONDON CASES;  
WHEREIN

*The Substance of those Books is digested into  
one Short and Plain Discourse.*

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THE FIFTH EDITION.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for James Knapton, at the Crown, and  
Richard Wilkin, at the King's Head, in St. Paul's  
Church-Yard. 1711.

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# THE PREFACE.

**T**HAT Collection of Cases and other Discourses, which was lately written by the most Eminent of the Conforming Clergy, to recover Dissenters to the Communion of the Church of England, has met with such an Universal Approbation, that I need not speak any thing in commendation of it. Therefore I shall wave all Discourse of that nature, and only give a short Account of this Abridgment.

The Collection it self being large and dear, it was thought convenient to reduce it to a less Bulk and smaller Price; that those Persons, who have not either Money to buy, or Time to peruse so big a Volume, may reap the Benefit of it upon easier Terms. This, I presume, will justify my Design, if I have not fail'd in the prosecution of it.

## THE PREFACE.

I have us'd my best Endeavors to avoid Obscurity, and all those other Faults which are often charg'd upon Abridgments: and I hope I may venture to say, I have omitted nothing that is Material; tho' the Number of these Sheets is not the Sixth part of those that contain the Original. For the Learned Authors of the Collection do frequently glance, and sometimes Discourse largely, upon the same Subject: so that by avoiding Repetitions, and blending all the Substance together, I have much less'n'd the Expence of Money and Time. This, and some other Advantages arise from the Digestion into Chapters; which cou'd not have been gain'd, if I had made a distinct Abridgment of every single Discourse.

I hope, I have fairly Represented the Sense of my Authors; but if I have mistaken or injur'd it in any particular, I am sorry for it, and do heartily beg Pardon of Them and the Reader.

The 11<sup>th</sup>. and 12<sup>th</sup> Chapters, I am sure, are exact; for they have receiv'd the A. Bp. of York's own Corrections, for which I am oblig'd to return his Grace my humblest Thanks. Other Parts I have submitted to the Censure of other worthy Persons, to whose Judgment I shall ever pay the greatest Deference: but I have reason to suspect my self for what I have receiv'd no Assistance

## THE PREFACE.

*in; and therefore I desire the Reader to correct me, when he finds Occasion.*

*I have follow'd not only my own Opinion, but the Directions of several very judicious Persons, in the omission of A. Bishop Tillotson's Discourse of Frequent Communion; which is wholly Foreign to the Design of the Collection.*

*The Quotations in the London Edit. 1698. which I follow, are very badly Printed; and therefore, if any Mistakes of that Nature have crept into this Book, I hope they will not be charg'd upon me. Many of them appear'd false at first View; and many I knew not what to make of: but some of them I have ventur'd to Correct.*

*God Almighty grant, that this weak Endeavor may be of some Service at least towards the Cure of those Divisions, which have endanger'd the Ruin of the Best Church in the World.*

*St. John's Coll. in Cambridge,  
Octob. 2d. 1699.*

**Tho. Bennet.**

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*A Catalogue of those Books, the Substance of  
which is contain'd in this Abridgment.*

1. **A**rchbishop *Tennison's* Argument for Union, taken from the true Interest of those *Dissenters* in *England*, who profess and call themselves *Protestants*.
2. Archbishop *Sharp's* Discourse concerning Conscience. In two parts.
3. Bishop *Grove's* Persuasive to Communion with the Church of *England*.
4. Bishop *Patrick's* Discourse of Profiting by Sermons.
5. Bishop *Fowler's* Resolution of this Case of Conscience, Whether the Church of *England's* Symbolizing, so far as it doth, with the Church of *Rome*, makes it unlawful to hold Communion with the Church of *England*.
6. *His* Defence of the Resolution, &c.
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8. *His* Case of Indifferent things used in the Worship of God.
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13. Dr. *Hicks's* Case of Infant Baptism.
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15. Dr.

## A CATALOGUE, &c.

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  16. Dr. *Calamy's* Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience.
  17. *His* Considerations about the Case of Scandal, or giving offence to Weak Brethren.
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ADVER-

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**O prevent the Reprinting of a very faulty Table of Texts of Scripture, which was added to the Fourth Impression of this Book without my Knowledge; I have been obliged to draw up this which follows, and which (I hope) is tolerably exact. I have also endeavored, by furnishing the Printer with a correct Copy, to purge out the mistakes of the former Editions, especially the Third and Fourth, wherein there are some gross ones.

Colchester, March  
9th. 17<sup>th</sup>.

*Tho. Bennet,*

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# THE INTRODUCTION,

Containing

An ARGUMENT for UNION

*Taken from the true Interest of those Dissenters  
in ENGLAND, who profess and call  
themselves PROTESTANTS,*

**T**IS plain, that the ready way to overthrow a Church, is first to divide it; and that our *Dissentions* are *Divisions* properly so call'd. How mortal these Breaches may at last prove, any Man may easily foretell; and therefore 'tis the business of every good Man to dissuade from them. One way of doing this is to shew *Dissenters* calmly and plainly, that their ends are not likely to be obtain'd; and that by the means they use, they will bring upon themselves those very evils, which they fear, and hope to remove.

This Argument I design to handle by way of Introduction to the following Discourse; and in the Management of it I intend to shew, *First*, what those ends are, which are propos'd by the Wiser and better *Dissenters*; and *Secondly*, that the

ends which they propose, can never be procured by the dissettlement of the *Church of England*.

The *Dissenters* ends are two; *First*, the Establishing of themselves, either as a National Church, or as several distinct Churches: *Secondly*, and chiefly, the farther Advancement of the Reform'd Religion, by the removal of *Popery*, and making the Protestant Religion more pure and perfect, than it is or can be under the present Constitution of the *Church of England*.

*First* then, as for the Establishing of themselves as a National Church, 'tis impossible that *all* of *them* should be United. For what Communion can the *Presbyterians* have with *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Anabaptists*, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, *Sensual Millenaries*, *Behmenists*, *Familists*, *Seekers*, *Antinomians*, *Ranters*, *Sabbatarians*, *Quakers*, *Muggletonians*, *Sweet-Singers*? Such a medly of Religions cannot frame amongst them any common Scheme, in which their assents can be United.

Nor can any *Prevalent Party* hope to establish themselves as a National Church; because they want *Episcopacy*, which hath obtain'd in *England* since it's first Conversion, and is so agreeable to the Scheme of the Monarchy, and will not easily be exchang'd for a new Model by the general consent of the *English*, who are naturally tenacious of their ancient Customs. *Again*, all the Parties amongst us have of late declar'd for mutual forbearance; and therefore they cannot be consistent with themselves, if they frame such a National Constitution, by which any Man who dissents from it, shall be otherwise dealt with, than by personal Conference; which also he must have liberty not to admit, if he be persuaded it is not fit or safe for him. Now such a Body, without  
any

## The INTRODUCTION.

any other Nerves for it's Strength and Motion, for the encouragement of those who are Members of it, and the discouragement of those who refuse it's Communion, will not long hold together ; nor hath it means in it sufficient for the ends to which it is design'd. And indeed by this means the Spiritual Power of Excommunication will be rendred of none effect. For what Punishment, what Shame, what Check will it be to cross and perverse Men ; if being shut out of the National Church, they may with open arms, and with an applause due to real Converts ; be receiv'd into this or the other particular Congregation, as it best suits with their good liking ?

Some Persons Think, that since they gathered Churches out of Churches, there are not many true and proper *Presbyterians* in *England* ; and if this be true, *Independency* is the prevalent side : but I know not how a National Church can be made up of separate *Independent* Churches. For each *Independent* Congregation is a Church by it self, and has, besides the general Covenant of Baptism, a particular Church Covenant ; and therefore 'tis difficult to imagin, how all of them can be United into one intire Society.

But be it suppos'd, that the *Presbyterians* are the most numerous and prevalent Party ; yet experience shews, how hard a work it is for all of them to form themselves into a Church of *England*. In the late times of public disquiet, tho' they had great power and fair opportunities, and seem'd nigh the gaining of their point, yet they widely miss'd of it. There were in the *Assembly of Divines*, some for an *Independent*, others for an

## The INTRODUCTION.

*Erasian* Interest. (a) There was a Party in the Nation, who were then call'd *Dissenting Brethren*; who hated the *Directory*, and Printed a Remonstrance against *Presbytery*, and reproach'd the *Presbyterians* in the same Phrases, which they had us'd against the *Church-Liturgy*. (b) Some *Presbyterians* did openly confess, that their hopes were not answer'd, and that instead of a *Reformation* they had a *Deformation* in Religion.

Those *Independents*, who adher'd to that part of the *House* which join'd with the Army, prevail'd for a season; but they also were disturb'd by the *Lilburnists*, *Levellers*, and *Agitators*. (c) Then *Wynstanly* publish'd the Principles of *Quakerism*, and *Enthusiasm* brake forth. *Joseph Salmon* a Member of the Army publish'd his Blasphemies, and defended his Immoralities; and printed a Book in which he set forth himself as the Christ of God. *Cromwell* favor'd *Enthusiasm*, and together with six Souldiers Preach'd and Pray'd at *Whitehall*; and confess'd to a Person of condition (from whom I receiv'd it, as did others yet living) that he Pray'd according to extraordinary impulse; and that not feeling such impulse (which he call'd supernatural) he did forbear to Pray, oftentimes for several days together. At last he and his *House of Commons* were publicly (d) disturb'd by *Quakers*, bespatter'd in their Books, his Preachers interrupted by them in his own *Chapel*

(a) Vid. *Whitlock's Memoirs*, p. 116. & 189. Harm. Consent. p. 20. (b) Testim. to the Truth of J. C. p. 31. (c) Myst. of Godlin. Anno 1649. *Wynstanly*. in *Srs. Paradise*, c. 5. p. 54, &c. *Whitlock's Memoirs*, p. 430, *Salmon's Rout*, in Pref. & p. 10, 11, &c. *Hist. of Indep.* part 2. p. 153. View of the late Troubles, p. 366. (d) *Whitlock's Memoirs*, p. 592, 606, 624. *Burroughs's Trumpet of the Lord*, p. 2.

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before his face; and himself conspir'd against by those who call'd themselves *the free and well affected People of England*. Other Memorials might be produc'd relating to the hopeful Rise, mighty progress, and equal declension of the *Presbyterian Party*: but in short, the longer the *Church of England* was distressed, the greater daily grew the Confusion; so that those very distractions prepar'd the Way for the Restitution of the King and the Church.

Now if *Dissenters* cou'd not settle themselves when they had such fair opportunities, much less can they do it now; because *First*, the platform of *Disciplin* so much applauded and contended for in the Reigns of *Q. Elizabeth* and *K. James*, has been partly try'd, and lost some of that Reverence which several had for it. *Secondly*, there is not now such an Union amongst *Dissenters*, as appear'd at the beginning of the late Troubles. *Thirdly*, those who then favor'd the *Disciplin*, do now incline to *Independency* and plead for *Toleration*. *Fourthly*, the sincere Zeal and Power of many Pious Men of Quality, who favor'd the *Disciplin* in the simplicity of their hearts, cou'd not then settle it; much less will it now succeed, since these Men have seen such *Revolutions*, and discover'd the Vile Interests of many under pretense of *Pure Religion*. These have seen their error, and will not be a second time engag'd. *Lastly*, by reason of the gross Hypocrisies, numberless Parties and Opinions, Irreligious Books, and Laxation of *Disciplin* in those Wars, *Atheism* has much increas'd; and they say, that some undisguis'd *Sceptics* and *Atheists* have, since the King's return, been much us'd in the Cause of our *Dissenters*; and surely such hands cannot do, what well meaning zeal cou'd not effect.

Nor can they settle themselves as several distinct Parties by a general Toleration. For *First*, some *Dissenters* believe some of the Parties to be incapable of forbearance, as maintaining Principles destructive of Christian Faith and Piety. This Opinion they still have of *Antinomians*, *Quakers* and *Muggletonians*; and they formerly declaim'd against the Toleration of *Erasians* and *Independents*. (e) Nay, many Ministers declar'd a Toleration to be an appointing a City of Refuge in Mens Consciences for the Devil to fly to—a Toleration of Soul-murder, the greatest Murder of all others, &c. *Secondly*, there is no firmness in this Union; for the Union that lasteth, is that of the Concord of Members in an Uniform Body. *Thirdly*, Parties cannot be kept equal in number and interest, but one will always prevail and be favor'd as the Religion of the State. And it is natural for the strongest to attempt to subdue all the rest; so that they will not be at peace, but in perpetual discord.

Some indeed think, this inclination to the swallowing up of other Parties is to be found almost only in the *Romish Church*; but there is something of it to be discern'd (I will not say in all Churches, for our own suffer'd *Bonner* himself to live, yet) in all *Factions* and *Parties*; tho' the inequality of Power makes it not seem to be alike in all of them. Parties, who are not (otherwise than in shew) concern'd for Religion, will perpetually covet after Power; and Parties that are conscientious in their way, will do the same. For they withdraw from others, because they think Communion with them to be unlawful; and if they

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(e) *Harmon. Consent.* p. 12.

think those of another way (without Repentance) to be lost eternally, Charity will urge them to reduce them; and they will think, that suffering them to wander declares them to be contented with their condition.

Besides, Experience shews, that where there is Power, there is little forbearance; and the same Men, as their conditions alter, speak of *Mercy* or *Justice*. Thus did the (f) *Donatists* of old, and the (g) *Heads* of the *Discipline* in the late Times. Those that remov'd to *New England* for Liberty of Conscience, when they had got footing there, refus'd Indulgence to *Anabaptists* and *Quakers*, and use them to this day with great severity. The (b) *Commons* in 47 gave Indulgence to all, but those that us'd the *Common-Prayer*. The *Dutch* suffer none to speak against those Doctrins, which the State has Authoriz'd; and the *Remonstrant* Party contend for Superiority, whenever they have any encouragement. The *Papish Orders* mortally hate, and (were they not restrain'd) would soon devour one another. And *Gittichius* his behavior towards (i) *Ruarus* a *Socinian* of better temper, shews the spirit of the *Socinians*, those great asserters of Liberty in Religion. The *Quakers* themselves, when form'd into a Society, began to Excommunicate and Domineer; and *G. Fox* (k) declar'd, *He never lik'd the word Liberty of Conscience, and wou'd have no Liberty given to Presbyterians, Papists, Independents and Baptists.*

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(f) Vid. *August. Cont. Petil. Lib. 2.* (g) Mr. *Calamy's* great dang. of *Cov. Ref.* p. 3. (h) *Whitlock's Memoirs*, p. 276. (i) *Ruari Epist.* par. 1. p. 415, 416. (k) *Spirit of the Hat*, p. 41.



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I proceed now to the *Second* and Chief end of the *Dissenters*, the removal of *Popery*, and perfecting the *Protestant* Religion. As for the removal of *Popery*, 'tis plain that the ruin of our Church, call'd by *Diodati* the *Eye of the reform'd Churches*, will rather advantage it both at home and abroad. For she being more like the *Primitive* Pattern than some others of the Reformation, can better answer the *Papists* Objections, than those that are cramp'd in a few Points; and therefore, if Dissentions ruin her, *Popery* will the sooner spread over *Foreign* Reform'd Countries. And since the *Romanists* are so powerful, diligent and cunning; have so much Learning and Interest; and pretend to Antiquity, Miracles, &c. nothing can secure us from them at home, but the Christian constitution and strong nature of the *Primitive*, Learned, Pure, Loyal and Pious Church of *England*; which is a National Body already form'd, that is able to detect the Forgeries of *Rome*, and hath not given advantage to her by running from her into any extreme.

*Monsieur Daillé*, who was not likely to be partial in this matter, and was at that time engaged in a Controversy with one of our Divines, (1) says, *As to the Church of England, purg'd from Foreign wicked, superstitious Worships and Errors, either impious or dangerous, by the rules of the Divine Scriptures, approv'd by so many and such illustrious Martyrs, abounding with Piety towards God, and Charity towards Men, and with most frequent examples of good works, flourishing with an Increase of most Learned and wise Men from the beginning of the Reformation to this time; I have always had it in just esteem, and till I die I shall continue in the same due veneration of it.*

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(1) De Confess. adv. Hammond. c. 1. p. 97, 98.

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And indeed it is strange, that any who know other Churches and States, shou'd be displeas'd at ours, which so much excels them. Now is it probable, that such a Church shou'd have less strength in it for the resisting of *Poper*y, than a number of divided Parties, the best of which is not so Primitive, Learned, United, Numerous or Legal; and is but of yesterday?

These Parties have scarce any form'd way of keeping out *Poper*y; for what hinders a crafty *Jesuit* from gathering and modelling a particular Congregation? And what a gap do they leave open for Seducers, who take away all legal Tests, and admit strangers to officiate upon bare pretense of spiritual Illumination!

The *Romanists* have more powerful ways of drawing Men from the *Dissenting* Parties, than from the Church of England. For Men separate (too frequently) thro' weakness of Imagination, for which the Church of Rome has variety of gratifications. They will offer strictnesses to the *severe*, and *Mental Prayer* to those who condemn or scruple *Forms*. They have *Myistical* Phrases for such, who think they have a new Notion, when they darken the Understanding with words; and accordingly the third part of a very *Myistical* Book, written by Father Benet a *Capuchin*, was reprinted in London in 46, with a (m) new Title, and without the Author's Name, and it pass'd amongst some of the Parties for a Book of very sublime Evangelical Truths. They use much gesture and great shew of Zeal in preaching. They have rough cords and mean garments, bare feet, and many other great shews of *Self denial*. They have *Processions* and other *Rites* to humor the sopphithness of others. But our Church

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(m) A Bright Star centring in Christ our Perfection. Printed for H. Overton, in Pope's head Alley.

is sufficient for this encounter. She designs to make Men good by making them first judicious; but some others desire to bring them to their side by catching of their imaginations; and so some new device shall, in time, bring them over to a new Party.

Dissention it self among *Protestants* weakens their interest; and that which weakens one side, strengthens another. Many that are wearied with endless wrangling, are too apt for quiet sake to run to *Infallibility*. Some *Dissenters* prepare the way for *Popery* by running into another extreme to avoid it. By decrying *Episcopacy, Liturgy, Festivals, &c.* as *Popish*, they condemn that as *Popish*, which is decent and Christian, and so bring *Popery* into reputation. For Men will be apt to say, If such good things be *Popish*, surely that which is *Popish*, is also Primitive and Evangelical. What we have examin'd is good, and probably the rest may be of the same kind.

It appears also from the History of our late Wars, that *Popery* gains ground by the ruin of our Church. For it made such a progress in those times, that the *Dissenters* charge the *Jesuits* with the King's murder; thereby tacitly owning, that they had so great a power over some of them, as to make them their Instruments in it. 'Tis evident to any Man, that *Popery* was not then rooted out; (n) 'tis notorious, that many Priests and other *Papists* fought and acted for the *Parliament* against the King: Nay, in 49, there was a design to (o) settle the *Popish* Discipline in *England* and *Scotland*. The *Papists* generally sheltered themselves under the Vizard of (p) *Independency*. A College of *Jesuits* was settled at (q) *Combe*

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(n) Vid. *Rob. Mentit de Salmonet* Hist. des troubles de la grand Bret. lib. 3. p. 165. Short View of the troub. p. 564. Arbir. gov. p. 28. *Whistl. Mem.* p. 279, 280, 282. *Exact. Coll.* p. 647. (o) Ibid. p. 405. (p) *Edwards's Gangr.* par. 2. p. 10. (q) B. of *Heref.* Narrat. to the Lords, p. 7.

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in 52; and 155 were reconcil'd to *Rome* that year. *Cromwell* (r) said, that he had some proof, that *Jesuits* had been found amongst the Discontented Parties; and *Dr. Bayly* the *Papist* (s) courted him as the hopes of *Rome*. One of his Physicians (t) saith, he was Treating with the *Papists* for a *Toleration*; but brake off, because they came not up to his Price; and because he fear'd it wou'd be offensive. We are (u) told also, that an agreement was made in 49 even with *Owen O'neal* that bloody *Romanist*; and that he in pursuance of the Interest of the State, rais'd the Siege of *Londonderry*. A great door was open'd to *Romish* Emissaries, when the Oaths of *Allegiance* and *Supremacy* were by public order taken away; and the Doctrin of the unlawfulness of an Oath, reviv'd in those days by (w) *Williams*, *Gorton*, &c. help'd equivocating *Papists* to an Evasion; as I fear it may the *Quakers* at this day. It was the *Church of England* that kept out *Popery* in those times. The patient sufferings of her Members prov'd, that they were not *Popish* or earthlyminded; and the Writings of *Laud*, *Chillingworth*, *Brambal*, *Cosins*, *Hammond*, &c. kept Men stedfast in the *Protestant* Religion.

To this we may add, that the *Papists* themselves, think their Cause is promoted by our Divisions, as appears from two *Jesuits*, viz. *Campanella* in his discourse of the *Spanish Mon.* chap. 25. p. 157. Printed at *Lond.* in *English* in 54. and *Contzen's Polit. Lib.* 2. Cap. 18. Sect. 9. And they act accordingly. For they widen our breaches, that themselves may enter; and hope that we shall be dissolv'd at last by

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(r) *Cromwell's Declar.* O<sup>B</sup>, 31. 1655. (s) *Dr. Bayly's Life* of *Bp. Fisher*, p. 260, 261. (t) *Elen. mot. Par.* 2. p. 347. (u) *Hist. Indep.* part 2. p. 245, &c. (w) *Cotton's Lr. Exam.* p. 4, 5. *Simplicis. defence*, p. 22. *Min. of Lond. Test.* p. 18.

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our distempers. They expose *Protestants* as a *Disunited* People; and ask Men, how they can in prudence join with those, who are at Variance among themselves?

As for the design of advancing the *Protestant* Religion to greater *Purity* and *Perfection* by dissettling the Church, it is not likely to be effected for six reasons. *First*, the dissettling that which is well settled, corrupteth Religion by removing *Charity*, which is the Spirit of it. It lets Men loose, that cannot govern themselves; it moves Men to *Atheism*, *Idolatry* and contempt of the Church, and confirms them in sin. It exposes the Church for a prey to the Enemy, as it did formerly in *Africa* and *Egypt*. Those that dissent from a National Church, generally move for alterations in it, when there is a ferment in the State; and in such seasons a Church may be pull'd in sunder, but there is not temper enough to set it together to advantage. *State-Dissenters* generally begin Revolutions with the pretense of Reforming Religion; and well meaning *Dissenters* (when in such hands) can establish nothing, but what pleases their secular Leaders. A change in the Church naturally produces some change in the State; and who can secure the event for the better? None can foresee all the ill consequences of disturbances. When the vessel is stirr'd, the lees come up; and Religion is made less pure by commotions. Politicians promise fair, and use conscientious Men to serve a turn; but afterwards they take other measures. Men may intend well; but by using the illegal Arm, they frequently render that which was well settled, much worse by their unhinging of it.

*Secondly*, in the Times of *Uurpation*, which began with pretense of a more Pure Religion, our Dissentions caus'd great Corruptions both in Faith and

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and Manners. The War was preach'd up as the Christian Cause; and many believ'd that *God wou'd not lay the greatest villainies to the charge of an elect Person*. The instances of their Extravagancies are endless; and the *Lords* and *Commons*, as well as the *Ministers*, were (u) highly sensible of them.

*Thirdly*, If by *Purity* of Religion be meant such Doctrin, Disciplin and Life, as the *Gospel* teaches, and a removal of human Inventions; that *Purity* is in our Church already: and as for her Injunctions, they are (like those of the *Primitive Church*) Rules of Ecclesiastical Wisdom in pursuance of the general Canons in Holy Writ. But if by *Purity* of Religion be meant a *fewness of parts*; as the *Quakers* believe their way is purer, because they have taken away Sacraments and outward Forms; by the same reason the *Papists* may say, that their Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is more pure than that of the *Protestants*, because they have taken the Cup from it. But it must be consider'd, that that which makes a *Pure Church*, is like that which makes a pure Medicine; not the fewness of the ingredients, but the goodness of them, how many soever they be, and the aptness of them for the procuring of health. Therefore our Church being already *Pure*, the ruin of it will not tend to the purity and advancement of the *Protestant Religion*.

*Fourthly*, The establishing of contrary Parties by a *Toleration* is not the way to perfect Religion, any more than the suffering of divers Errors wou'd be the means of reforming them. One Principle only can be true; and a mixture of Sacred and Profane is the greatest impurity.

*Fifthly*, Many *Dissenters* are not like to improve

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(u) Vid. *Ordin. Feb. 4. 1646. Min. Testim. p. 31.*

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Christianity, because they lay aside the Rules of discretion, and rely not on God's assistance in the use of good means; but depend wholly upon immediate illumination without the aids of prudence.

*Sixthly*, Our Church has already better means to promote *Pure Religion*, than any the *Dissenters* have propos'd. Any Church may be improv'd in small matters; but 'twere very imprudent to change the present model for any that has yet been offer'd. We have all the necessaries to Faith and Godliness; Primitive disciplin, decency and order are preserv'd; We have as many truly pious Members as any Nation under Heaven, and such excellent Writers and Preachers as God ought to be prais'd for: whereas amongst the Parties, the folly and weakness of Preachers is deliver'd solemnly as the dictate of God's Holy Spirit.

I may add also, that the *Dissenters* Doctrine of God's secret Decrees, their Ordination by Presbyters without a Bishop, their long unstudy'd effusions, their leaving the Creed out of the *Directory for public Worship*, their sitting at the Lord's Supper (and that sometimes with the Hat on) their alteration of the Form of giving the holy Elements, and their forbidding the observation of Festivals, were not so conducive to the edifying of the Body of Christ, as those things which were in the late Times illegally remov'd by them.

It is easy enough to alter a Constitution; but 'tis extreme difficult to make a true and lasting improvement.

*To conclude*, since it appears, that *Dissenters* are not like to obtain their ends of establishing themselves, of rooting out *Popery*, and promoting pure Religion, by overthrowing the Church of *England*; therefore they ought both in Prudence and Charity to endeavor after Union with it.

CHAP.

## C H A P. I.

*Of the Necessity of living in constant Communion with the Establish'd Church of England.*

**T**HAT I may discourse with all possible clearness, it will be necessary before I proceed, to explain a few things. 1. What is meant by a Christian Church. 2. What *Church Communion* is. 3. What is meant by *First Communion*, and by *Occasional Communion*.

I. Then, *A Church is a Body or Society of Men, separated from the rest of the World, and united to God and to themselves by a Divine Covenant. It is a Body or Society, in opposition to particular Men and to a confus'd Multitude. For tho' it do's consist of particular Men, yet those Men are consider'd, not in a private capacity, but as united into a regular Society. For God is not the Author of confusion. And if the meanest Societies cannot subsist without order, much less the Church of God, which is a Society instituted for the most spiritual and supernatural ends. The Jewish Church had exact order; and the Christian Church, with respect to the Union and Order of it's parts, is not only call'd a Body, but a Spiritual Building, an Holy Temple, and the Temple of God.*

But then the Church is *One Body* in opposition to many Bodies. The *Jewish Church* was but *One*; and therefore the *Christian*, which is grafted into the *Jewish*, is but *One*. The Church is call'd the *Temple of God*, and the Temple was but *One* by the command of God. Christ also tels us, that there shou'd be but *one fold under one shepherd*, Joh. 10. 16. And indeed



indeed it is extremely absurd to say, that the Christian Church, which has the same Foundation, the same Faith, the same Promises, the same Privileges ; shou'd be divided into separate Bodies of the same kind. For certainly, where every thing is common, there is *One Community*. 'Tis true, distinct Men, tho' of the same common Nature, have distinct Essences, and this makes them distinct Persons ; but where the very Essence of a Body or Society consists in having all things common, there can be but *One Body*. And therefore if *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, be common to the whole Christian Church ; and if no Christian has any peculiar Privileges ; then there is but *one Church*.

I add, that the Church is a Body or Society of Men *separated from the rest of the World* ; upon which account Christians are call'd the *Chosen* or *Elect* People of God, having a peculiar Faith, Laws, Rites, &c. which are not common to the whole World. It is also a Society of Men *united to God and themselves by a Divine Covenant*. It is united to God, because it is a Religious Society ; and the Men are united to themselves, because they are *one Society*. But the chief thing to be observ'd is, that the Union is made by a *Divine Covenant*. Thus God made a Covenant with *Abraham*, of which Circumcision was the Seal ; and the Christian Church is nothing else, but such a Society of Men, as are in Covenant with God thro' Christ. I suppose all Men will grant, that God only can make a Church ; and that the only visible way he has of forming a Church, is by granting a *Church-Covenant*, which is the Divine Charter whereon the Church is founded ; and by authorizing some Persons to receive others into this Covenant by such a form of admission as he shall institute, which form under the Gospel is Baptism. So that to be taken  
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into Covenant with God, and to be receiv'd into the Church, are the same thing; and he is no Member of the Church, who is not visibly admitted into God's Covenant.

From what has been said it plainly follows, 1. that a Covenant State and a Church State, are the same thing. 2. That every profess Christian, who is receiv'd into Covenant, as such, is a Church Member. 3. That nothing else is necessary to make us Members of the Christian Church, but only Baptism, which gives us right to all the privileges of the Covenant. 4. That no Church State can depend upon human Contracts and Covenants, and therefore the *Independent* Church Covenant between Pastor and People is no part of the Christian Church Covenant; because it is no part of the Baptismal Vow, which is one and the same for all Mankind, and the only Covenant which Christ has made. And why then do the *Independents* exact such a Covenant of Baptiz'd persons, before they admit them to their Communion? 5. That it is absurd to gather Churches out of Churches, which already consist of Baptiz'd persons. For there is but one Church, which is founded upon a Divine Covenant, and this we are made Members of by Baptism; if therefore an *Independent* Church Covenant be necessary, then the Baptismal Covenant is of no value, till it be confirm'd by entring into a particular Church Covenant. 6. That if the Church be founded on one Covenant, then the Church is but one. For those that have an interest in the same Covenant, are Members of the same Church; and tho' the Universal Church, for Man's conveniency, be divided into several Parts or Congregations, yet it cannot be divided into two or more Churches. So that two Churches which are not Members of each other, cannot partake in the same Covenant.

but the divider forfeits his interest in it. A Prince indeed may grant the same Charter to several Corporations; but if he confine his Charter to the Members of one Corporation, those who separate from the Corporation, forfeit their interest in the Charter. Thus has God granted a Charter or Covenant, and declares that by this one Covenant he Unites all Christians into one Church, into which we are admitted by Baptism; and therefore if we separate from this one Church, we forfeit our interest in it. God has not made a particular Covenant with the Church of *Geneva*, *France*, or *England*, but with the one Catholic Church; and therefore if we do not live in Unity with the Catholic Church, we have no right to the Blessings promis'd to it.

II. By Church Communion I mean *Church Society*. To be in Communion with the Church, is to be a Member of it. And this is call'd *Communion*, because all Church Members have a common right to Church Privileges, and a common obligation to the Duties of Church Members. 'Tis true, this word *Communion* is commonly us'd to signify *praying, hearing, and receiving the Sacraments together*; but strictly speaking those Offices are not Communion, but an Exercise of Communion. Church Communion is Church Union; for as a Member must be united to the Body, before it can perform the natural action of a Member: so a Man must be in Communion with the Church, before he has a right to *Pray*, &c. And therefore, tho' a Man that is not in Union or Communion with the Church, shou'd perform those Offices; yet the performance of them do's not make him a Member of the Church, but an Intruder. Such Offices are acts of Communion, if perform'd by Church Members; but not otherwise. So that to be in Communion with the Church

is to be a Member of it ; and by being a Member a Man has a right to the Blessings promis'd to it, and an obligation to perform the Offices of *Church Society*, viz. obedience to the Church's authority, joining in Prayers, &c. and he that acts otherwise, renounces his Communion with it.

From what has been said I observe, 1. That Church Communion principally respects not a particular, but the Universal Church, which is but one all the World over. For Membership may extend to the remotest parts of the World, if the body, whereof we are Members, reach so far : and Baptism makes us Members of the Universal Church, because it admits us into the Covenant, which God made with the Universal Church. 2. That every act of Christian Communion, such as *praying*, &c. is an act of Communion with the whole Catholic Church, tho' it must be perform'd in a particular Congregation, because all Christians cannot meet in one place. Thus do we as Fellow Members pray to God the *Common* Father of Christians, in the Name of Christ the *Common* Savior of Christians, for the same *Common* Blessings, for our selves and all other Christians. Thus also the Supper of the Lord is not a private Supper, but the *Common* Feast of Christians, and an act of *Catholic Communion*. 3. That the only reason, why I am bound to live in Communion with any particular Church, is because I am a Member of the whole Christian Church. For I must live in Communion with the whole Christian Church ; and this cannot be done without actual Communion with some part of it. So that I have nothing else to do, but to consider, whether that part of the Catholic Church wherein I live, be so sound, that I may lawfully live in Communion with it ; and if it be, I am bound to do so under peril of Schism from the Catholic.

tholic Church. 4. That those Churches which are not Members of each other, are separate Churches ; because the Catholic Church being but one, all particular Churches ought to be Members of it. To make this plain, I shall lay down some few Rules, whereby we may certainly know, what Churches are in Communion with each other, and which are Schismatical Conventicles.

1. There must be but one Church in one place ; because private Christians ought to join with those Christians with whom they live ; and to withdraw our selves from ordinary Communion with the Church in which we live, into separate Societies, is to renounce it's Communion ; and when there is not a necessary cause for it, is a Schismatical separation. Every particular Church must have it's limits, as every Member in the Body has it's proper place : but when there is one Church within the Bowels of another, it is a notorious Schism. This is the case of our *Dissenters*, who refuse to worship God in the same assemblies with us. Distinct Churches at a distance may be of the same Communion : but distinct Churches in the same place can never be of the same Communion ; for then they would naturally unite. So that all separation from a Church wherein we live, unless there be necessary reasons for it, is Schism.

'Tis true, a Nation may permit those Foreigners that are among them, to model their Congregations according to the Rules of those Churches, to which they originally belong ; and that without any danger of Schism. For a bare variety of Ceremonies makes no Schism between Churches, while they live in Communion with each other. Now every particular National Church has Authority over her own Members to prescribe the rules of Worship : but as she does not impose upon  
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other Churches, at a distance; so she may allow the same Liberty to the Members of such Foreign Churches, when they live within her Jurisdiction. Fortho' all true Churches are Members of each other, yet each Church has a peculiar jurisdiction; and therefore for the Church of *England* to allow Foreigners to observe their own Rules, is not to allow separate Communion, but to leave them to the Government of the Church, to which they belong. So that distinct Congregations of Foreigners, who own the Communion of our Church, tho' they observe the customs of their own, are not Schismatical, as the separate Conventicles of our *Dissenters* are.

2. Those are separate Churches, which divide from the Communion of any Church, from any dislike of it's Doctrine, Government or Worship. For in this case they leave the Church, because they think it unsafe to continue one body with it. Two Churches may be in Communion with each other, and yet not actually Communicate together, because distance of place will not permit it: but it is impossible that two Churches, which renounce each others Communion, or at least withdraw ordinary Communion from each other, from a profess'd dislike, shou'd still continue in Communion with each other. Because they are opposite Societies, founded upon contrary Principles, and acting by contrary Rules, and pursuing contrary Ends, to the ruin and subversion of each other.

3. Those are separate Churches, which do not own each others Members as their own. The Christian Church is but *one* Household and Family; and whoever makes two Families of it, is a Schismatic. If Christians in the same Kingdom hold separate Assemblies under distinct kinds of Government and different Governors, and condemn each others constitution and

modes of Worship, and endeavor to draw away Members from each other; they cannot be thought to be one Church. And indeed we may as well say, that several sorts of Government in the same Nation, with distinct Governors, distinct Subjects and distinct Laws, that are always at Enmity and War with each other, are but one Kingdom; as we may say, that such Congregations are but one Church.

III. I am to explain what is meant by *Fixt* and by *Occasional* Communion. By *fixt* Communion the *Dissenters* understand an actual and constant Communicating with some one particular Church, as *fixt* Members of it. By *occasional* Communion they mean praying, hearing and receiving the Sacrament at some other Church (of which they do not own themselves to be Members) as occasion serves; that is, either to gratify their own curiosity, or to serve some secular end, or to avoid the imputation of Schism. Now *fixt* Communion is the only true notion of Communion; for *occasional* Communion do's not deserve the name of Communion. For I have prov'd, that he who is not a Member, cannot perform an act of Communion; and therefore it is as plain a contradiction to talk of an *occasional* act of Communion, as of an *Occasional* Membership. Since every act of Communion is an act of Communion with every sound part of the Catholic Church, therefore the exercise of Christian Communion is equally *fixt* and constant, or equally *occasional* with the whole Catholic Church.

'Tis true, in one sense we may be Members of a particular Church, that is, we may live under the Government of a particular Bishop in a particular National Church; but yet every act of Communion perform'd in this particular Church is an act of Communion with every sound part of the Catholic Church.

Church. So that whenever I communicate, whether in that Church in which I usually live, or in any other particular Church, where I am accidentally present, my Communion is of the same nature. Now our ordinary Communion with those Churches where our constant abode is, may be call'd fixt Communion; and our Communion with those Churches where we are accidentally present, may be call'd occasional Communion; and all this may be done without Schism, because all these Churches are Members of each other: but we cannot lawfully join sometimes with the establish'd Church, and sometimes with a separate Congregation; because the case is vastly different. For the establish'd Church and the *Dissenters* Congregations are not Members of each other, but separate Churches. Now 'tis impossible for any Man to be a Member of two separate Churches; and whatever acts of worship we join in with other Churches, of which we are no Members, they are not properly acts of Communion.

Having thus explain'd the *Three* foregoing Particulars, I proceed to the main business, which was to shew, that *it is the indispensable duty of all English Men to live in constant Communion with the establish'd Church of England.* This I shall do by shewing,

*First*, That Communion with some Church or other is a necessary Duty.

*Secondly*, That constant Communion with that Church, with which occasional Communion is lawful, is a necessary Duty; from whence I shall make it appear,

*Thirdly*, That it is necessary to continue in constant Communion with the establish'd Church of England.



I. Then, it is plain, that *Communion with some Church or other is a necessary Duty*. Because to be in Communion is to be a Member of Christ; and he that is a Member, has a right to the Privileges and an obligation to the duties of a Member; and 'tis certain that Communion in Prayers, &c. is none of the least Privileges of Christianity, and that 'tis the duty of a Member to Communicate in Religious Offices. But to put the matter out of all doubt, I shall offer *Five* things, to prove that external and actual Communion is a necessary Duty.

1. Baptism makes us Members of the visible Church of Christ; but there can be no visible Church without visible Communion, and therefore every visible Member is bound to visible Communion, when it may be had. 2. This is Essential to the notion of a Church, as it is a Society of Christians. For since all Societies are instituted for the sake of some common Duties and Offices, therefore some duties and offices must be perform'd by the Society of Christians; especially since the Church consists of different Offices and Officers, as *Pastors*, &c. *Eph. 4. 11.* which are of no use, if private Christians are not bound to maintain Communion with them in all Religious Offices. 3. The nature of Christian worship obliges us to Church Communion. For we are bound to worship God according to Christ's Institution, that is, by the hands of the Ministry authoriz'd for that purpose, *Acts 2. 42.* and therefore, tho' the private Prayers of Church Members are acceptable, yet none but public Prayers offer'd up by the Ministers, are properly the Prayers of the Church, and acts of Church Communion. Nay, the Lord's Supper, which is the principal part of God's worship, is a common Supper or Communion Feast, and cannot possibly be

be celebrated but in actual Communion. 4. The exercise of Church Authority, which consists in admitting Men to, or excluding them from, the external acts of Communion, supposes that Church Members are obliged to visible Communion. 5. If Separation from Religious Assemblies be to break Communion, as it plainly appears to be from 2 Cor. 6. 17. 1 Job. 2. 19. Heb. 10. 25. then to live in Communion with the Church, requires our actual Communicating with the Church in all Religious Duties. Accordingly, to have Communion with any, is to partake with them in their Religious Mysteries, 1 Cor. 10. 20, 21. So that tho' we must first be in a state of Communion, before we have a right to Communicate; yet we cannot preserve our Church State without actual Communion. And a right to Communicate without actual Communion, which is an exercise of that right, is worth nothing; because all the blessings of the Gospel are convey'd to us by actual Communion.

This is sufficient to prove the necessity of actual Communion with the Church, when it may be had; for when it can't be had, we are not obliged to it. But then the greater difficulty is, whether it be lawful to *suspend Communion* with all, because the Church is divided into Parties. Now a Man may as well be of no Religion, because there are different Opinions in Religion; as Communicate with no Church, because the Church is divided into Parties. For 'tis possible to know which is a true and sound part of the Catholic Church; and when we know that, we are bound to maintain Communion with it. Indeed if Divisions excuse from actual Communion with the Church, then Church Communion never was or can be a Duty; for there were Divisions even in the *Apostles* times. But the rule is plain; for we  
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are bound to Communicate with the *Establish'd* Church, if it may be done without sin. The advantage lies on the side of Authority, and to separate from such a Church is both disobedience and Schism.

But what is meant by *Suspending Communion*? These Men will not say, that it is lawful never to worship God in any public Assemblies during the divisions in the Church; and therefore they mean, that in case of such Divisions, they may refuse to enter themselves fixt and settled Members of any Church, but communicate occasionally with them all. But I have already shewn, how absurd this Distinction of fixt and occasional Communion is; and that every Member of the Church is a fixt, and not an occasional Member; and that every act of Communion is an act of fixt Communion. So that when Men Communicate occasionally, as they speak, with all the different Parties of Christians in a divided Church, they either communicate with none, or with all of them. If with none, then they maintain Communion with no Church, which I have prov'd it to be their Duty to do: but if they communicate with all, then they are Members of separate and opposite Parties; that is, they are contrary to themselves, and on one side or other are certain to be Schismatics.

II. I am now to shew in the 2d. place, That *Constant Communion is a necessary duty, where occasional Communion is lawful*. Every true Christian is in Communion with the whole Christian Church, that is, is a Member of the whole Church; and therefore he must constantly perform the acts of Communion in that part of the Church in which he lives. So that he cannot without sin Communicate only occasionally with that Church, with which he may and ought

ought to Communicate constantly, as being constantly present there. There cannot be two distinct Churches in the same place, one for constant, and another for occasional Communion, without Schism; and therefore where my constant abode is, there my constant Communion must be, if there be a true and sincere part of the Catholic Church in that place. For it is not lawful to Communicate with two distinct and separate Churches in the same place, as for instance, sometimes with the *Church of England*, sometimes with the *Presbyterians*; because this is directly contrary to all the principles of Church Communion. For to be in Communion with the Church is to be a Member of it; and to be a Member of two separate and opposite Churches, is to be as contrary to our selves as those separate Churches are to each other; and whoever Communicates with both those Churches, on one side or other Communicates in a Schism. So that if Schism be a very great sin, and that which will damn us as soon as Adultery or Murder, then it must needs be unlawful and dangerous to Communicate with Schismatics.

Nothing less than sinful terms of Communion can justify our separation from the establish'd Church wherein we live; for otherwise there cou'd be no end of Divisions, but Men might new model Churches as often as their fancies alter. That is a Sound and Orthodox part of the Catholic Church, which has nothing sinful in it's Communion; otherwise no Church can be Sound and Orthodox. Now that Man that separates from such a sound part of the Church, separates from the whole Church, because the Communion of the Church is but *one*. Since therefore those who Communicate occasionally with the establish'd Church, do thereby own, that there  
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are no sinful terms of Communion with it ; and since he who separates from that establish'd Church, where there are no sinful terms of Communion, is guilty of Schism; therefore a Man is obliged to join constantly with that Church, with which he owns it lawful to Communicate occasionally.

III. Now if these things be true, which I have so plainly prov'd, then it will easily be made appear in the *Third* place, that it is necessary to continue in constant Communion with the establish'd Church of England. For since a Man is obliged to join constantly with that Church, with which he owns it lawful to join occasionally; therefore it is plain, that all English Men are obliged to join constantly with the establish'd Church of England, because they may lawfully Communicate with it Occasionally. But if any Man say that 'tis not lawful to Communicate occasionally with the establish'd Church of England, I doubt not to make it appear in the following discourse, that he is greatly mistaken.

'Tis not my present business to prove, that the Pastors of Dissenting Congregations ought to subscribe to the *Articles*, &c. For tho' that matter may be easily made out, yet 'tis foreign to my purpose; my design being only to satisfy *Lay dissenters*, and to shew that they may lawfully join with our Church, because then it will appear to be their duty to do so constantly. And certainly, if the Case of *Lay Communion* were truly stated and understood, the People wou'd not be far more averse to Communion with the Parish Churches, than the Non-Conforming Ministers, who have often join'd with us. And as the Ministers, by bringing their Case to the Peoples, may see Communion then to be lawful, and find themselves obliged to maintain it in a private capacity: so the People by perceiving their Case not

to be that of the Ministers, but widely different from it, wou'd be induced to hold Communion with the Church.

It appears therefore from what I have already said, that if that part of the Church in which we live, be a true and sound part of the Catholic Church, then we are obliged to maintain constant Communion with it. And that the *Establiſh'd Church of England* is ſuch a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church, even our *Diffenters* themſelves have fully prov'd. For all or moſt of thoſe, with whom I am to Treat, have join'd in our ſolemn Offices of Devotion; which they cou'd not lawfully do, if our Church were not a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church of Chriſt. But I ſhall not inſiſt upon that perſonal Argument; becauſe I deſign to deſcend to particulars, and ſhew *Fiſt*, that our Church is a true and ſound part of the Chriſtian Church, and *Secondly*, that thoſe Pleas which the *Diffenters* make uſe of to excuſe their ſeparation from her, are vain and frivolous.

*Fiſt*, Then, the *Establiſh'd Church of England* is a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church. That 'tis a true Church, appears from the Confession of the moſt Eminent and Sober (a) *Non Conformiſts*; nay, the Old *Non-Conformiſts* undertake to (b) prove it, and ſo do's the (c) Author of *Jerubbaal*; and if I ſhou'd proceed to particulars, I might fill a Volume

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(a) Bayly's *Diffuative*, c. 2. p. 21. *Corbet's* *Diſcourſe of the Religion of England*, p. 33. *Non-Conformiſts* no *Schiſmatics*, p. 13. See *Ball's* *Friendly Trial*, c. 13. p. 306. *Letters of Miniſters in Old England to Miniſters in New England*, p. 24. (b) *A Grave and Sober Confut.* p. 1, &c. p. 57. (c) *Jerubbaal*, or the *Pleader impleaded*, p. 18, & 27.

with (d) Testimonies. 'Tis true, they own her to be a true Church upon different Grounds, because some of the *Dissenting Writers* are for a National, and others for a Congregational Church; but they (e) all agree in this, that the Church of England is a true Church, tho' they say she is a corrupted one. Nay (f) they do not only grant her to be a true Church, but also declare her to be one of the most valuable, if not the very best in the World. But I shall say no more of this matter; only I refer the Reader to Mr. *Baxter's Cure of Ch. divis. dir.* 56. p. 263.

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(d) Concerning her Doctrin, See the Opinion of the *Presbyt.* in *Corbet's Discourse*, §. 21. p. 43. *Baxter's five Disp. Pref.* p. 6. of the *Independents in the Peace Offering*, p. 12. See also *Baxter's Def. of his Cure*, part 1. p. 64. part 2. p. 3. *Wadsworth's Separ.* yet no Schism, p. 60, 62. *Throughton's Apology*, c. 3. p. 106. and of the *Brownists in their Apol.* p. 7. Anno 1604. See also *Bayly's Dissuasive*, c. 2. p. 20, 33. *Stillingsfleet's Unreasonableness of Separ.* part 1. §. 9. p. 31. For Opinions concerning her Worship, See *Hildersham's Lect.* 26. on *Joh.* p. 121. Contin. of Morn. Exercise, Sermon 4. p. 91. *Throughton's Apology*, p. 104. Peace Offering, p. 17. For Opinions concerning the Truth, sufficiency and ability of her Ministry, See *Bradshaw's Unreasonableness of Separ.* p. 16, 27, 37. *Grave and Mod. Confut.* p. 28. Apologet. Narrat. p. 6. *Cotton's Infant-Baptism*, p. 181. For the defence of the Ordination of our Ministry, See *Jus Divin. Minist. Evangel.* part 2. p. 12, 16, 17, 25, &c. *Jus Div. regim. Eccles.* p. 264, &c. *Cawdry's Independency a great Schism*, p. 116. and his defence of it, p. 35, 37. (e) *Jus Div. Min. Evangel.* p. 12, &c. *Brinsly's Church-Remedy*, p. 41, 42. *Cawdry's Independency a great Schism*, p. 60, 89, 132, 172. *Tombes's Theodulia*, §. 15, 16. pref. &c. 9. §. 3. *Crofton's Reformation not Separation*, p. 10. and *Bethshemesh Clouded*, p. 101, &c. *Church Reform.* p. 42. *Corbet's account of the Principles*, &c. p. 26. *Throughton's Apology*, p. 103. *Baxter's defence of his Cure*, part 2. p. 178. *Cotton's Way clear'd*, p. 8. his Letter, p. 3. *Hooker's Survey*, pref. &c. part 1. p. 47. *Goodwin on the Ephef.* p. 447, 448, 449. (f) *Grave and Mod. Confut.* p. 6. *Goodwin's Sion Coll. visited.* *Bradshaw's Unreasonableness of the Separation*, p. 97.

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That the Establish'd Church is also a found, as well as a true part of the Catholic Church, might easily appear by an Examination of it; but I shall not enter upon so large a work, because it is not necessary: for I conceive that our *Dissenters* will be not only willing, but forward to acknowledge it, when I shall have answer'd those Objections which they are pleas'd to make against our Communion, and shewn that those Pleas which they raise from them, are by no means sufficient to make Separation lawful. I proceed therefore to the several Pleas, and design to examin them in their natural Order.

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C H A P. II.

*The use of indifferent things in the Worship of God, no Objection against our Communion.*

THE First Objection against our Communion is drawn from the use of indifferent things.

Our Adversaries say, that indifferent things may not lawfully be us'd in the Worship of God, and that our Communion is therefore unlawful, because we require Men to use such indifferent things. Now that this Objection may be fully answer'd, I shall do four things, *viz.*

*First*, I shall shew what is meant by indifferent things.

*Secondly*, I shall shew that indifferent things may be lawfully us'd in Divine Worship.

*Thirdly*, I shall consider how we may know, what things are indifferent in the Worship of God.

*Fourthly*, I shall shew, how we are to determine our selves in the use of indifferent things, with respect to the Worship of God.

I. Then



I. Then, I shall shew *what is meant by indifferent things*. All actions are either duties or sins, or *indifferent*, that is, such as are neither Duties nor sins. Duties or sins are so, either in their own nature, or by Divine Law. That which is commanded is a duty; that which is forbidden is a sin; but that, which is neither commanded nor forbidden, is *indifferent*; because 'tis neither duty nor sin; and we may either chuse or refuse it without sin. For *where no law is, there is no transgression*; Rom. 4. 15. Duty is duty, because 'tis commanded; and sin is sin, because 'tis forbidden; and indifferent is indifferent, because 'tis neither commanded nor forbidden. So that we may as well know by the silence of the Law what is indifferent, as we may know by it's Authority what is a duty or a sin. For where there is no Law for or against, the matter is indifferent. As for instance, suppose there shou'd be a dispute concerning days set a part for the service of God; how must this be determin'd, but by the Law of Nature or Revelation? Now if neither the Law of Nature, nor the Law of Revelation, say any thing of the observation of such days, then we are at liberty to observe or not to observe them.

II. *Indifferent things may be us'd in Divine worship*; as appears, 1. From the consideration of the Gospel Rules of Worship, which (except what relate to the two Sacraments) are taken from the Nature of the things, and were the same in all Ages; *viz.* such as respect *Order, Decency and Edification*. 1 Cor. 14. 26, 40. So that we are no otherwise bound, than all the World ever was; and therefore, since others have always determin'd the outward circumstances of worship, we have also the same liberty. The rules themselves are general, and the *Apostles* rarely descend to particulars; but whenever they do,  
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they shew how far Custom, Charity and the reason of the thing ought to govern us; (as in the case of a Man's being uncover'd in God's worship, 1 Cor. 11. 4, 7.) for they thought it impossible or not worth their while, to tie all Nations to the same Modes, since God may be honour'd by one as well as the other. If it be said, that *when things are determin'd in general, the particulars are therein Virtually determin'd, and so are not indifferent*; I answer, that then nothing is indifferent, since there are general rules about every thing. As for example, all Meats are now lawful to Christians; but yet there are general rules, by which we are determin'd in the use of them, such as our own *Constitution*, &c. but those rules do not make the Meats to be other than indifferent. So there are general rules for God's worship; but yet the particulars are indifferent, and prudence is to regulate them. The general rules of *Order*, *Decency* and *Edification* depend upon variable circumstances, and may be different according to those circumstances. That thing may tend to *Order*; *Decency* and *Edification* in one Country or Age, which in another may tend to the contrary. Thus *being cover'd in the Church*, and the Custom of *Love-Feasts*, &c. were once thought decent; but afterwards the opinions of Men alter'd. So that *Order*, *Decency* and *Edification* being changeable things, as circumstances vary, only general rules can be prescrib'd; but the particulars must be left to Authority to determin.

2. Our Savior and his *Apostles* did use indifferent things, which were not prescrib'd, in Divine Worship. Thus he joyn'd in the Synagoga! Worship, *John* 18. 20, &c. tho' (if the place it self were at all prescrib'd) the manner of that Service was not so much as hinted at. Thus he us'd the Cup of Charity in the Passover, tho' it was not instituted;

*Luke* 22. 17. The Feast of Dedication was an human institution, yet he vouchsaf'd to be present at it. Nay he comply'd with the *Jews* in the very posture of the Passover, which they chang'd to *Sitting*, tho' God had prescrib'd *Standing*. The *Apostles* also observ'd the hours of Prayer, which were of human institution, *Acts* 3. 1. Now if Christ and his *Apostles* did thus under the *Jewish* Law, which was so exact in prescribing outward Ceremonies; certainly we may do the same under the Gospel. I may add, that the Primitive Christians not only comply'd with the *Jews* in such Rites as were not forbidden, but also had some ritual observations taken up by themselves. Thus they (a) wash'd the Disciples feet in imitation of Christ, and (b) us'd Love-Feasts; till they thought it convenient to lay them aside. From whence it appears, that prescription is not necessary to make a Rite lawful; 'tis enough if it be not forbidden.

If it be said, that these usages of the Christian Church were *civil observances*, and us'd as well out of God's worship as in it; and therefore what there needed no institution for, might be lawfully us'd without it; I answer, 1. That this justifies most of our usages; for a white Garment was us'd in civil cases as a sign of *Royalty* and *Dignity*, &c. 2. A civil observance, when us'd in Religious worship, either remains civil, when so apply'd; or is religious, when so apply'd. If it be civil, then kneeling in God's worship is not religious, because 'tis a posture us'd in civil matters. If it be religious, then a rite that is not prescrib'd, may be us'd in worship to a religious end. 3. 'Tis evi-

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(a) 1 Tim. 5. 10. *Ambros.* De Sacram. lib. 3. cap. 1.  
 (b) *Tertull.* De Orat. cap. 14.

dent, that (c) neither the washing of Feet nor the holy Kifs were us'd as civil rites; and that the latter is call'd by the Fathers *the Seal of Prayer and the Seal of Recouciation*. 4. If a rite's being civil makes it lawful in Divine worship, then any civil rite may be us'd in worship, and consequently all the ridiculous practices of the Church of *Rome* wou'd be warrantable. 5. If a rite's being civil makes it lawful in worship, then how can our adversaries say, that *nothing is to be us'd in worship, but what is prescrib'd by God, except the natural circumstances of action*? For there are many civil Rites which are not natural circumstances of action. Feasting and Salutation are civil usages; but Divine worship can be perform'd without them. And if these and the like were antiently us'd in worship, then we have the same liberty to introduce such customs.

3. If things indifferent, tho' not prescrib'd, may not be lawfully us'd in God's worship, then we cannot lawfully join with any Church in the World. For all Churches do in some instances or other take the liberty of using, what the *Scripture* has no where requir'd. Thus the (d) antients observ'd the Feasts of the Passion, Resurrection, &c. stood in their Devotions on the Lord's Day, &c. These things they all agreed in, and thought it unlawful to act against an universal practice. Besides, some Churches had peculiar customs within the bounds of their own Communion. The Church of *Rome* fasted on *Saturdays*, others indifferently on any Day. That of *Milan* wash'd the Feet of persons to be Baptiz'd, but that of *Rome* did not. Thus in our days some re-

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(c) *Buxtorf. Exerc. Hist. Sac. Coen.* (d) *Vid. August. Epist. 118, 119. Basil. De Sp. S. cap. 27. Ambros. De Sacram. lib. 2. cap. 7. & lib. 3. cap. 1.*

ceive the Lord's Supper kneeling, others standing, &c. So that if we must have an Institution for every thing done in the worship of God, and if we must join in nothing which has it not, then we cannot be members of any Church in the World. Nor indeed can I learn how a Christian can, with a good conscience, perform any part of God's worship, if this principle be admitted for true. For habits and gestures are not determin'd in *Scripture*, and God's worship cannot be perform'd without them; and if they are unlawful, for *not being commanded*, then a Man must Sin every time he Praies or receives the Sacrament.

Nay those that condemn the use of *such things as are not commanded*, do in their practice confute their opinion. For where, I pray, are they commanded to sprinkle the Children that are Baptized? or to receive the Lord's Supper sitting? or to use conceiv'd Prayers? or to touch or kiss the Book in Swearing? Or to enter into a particular Church covenant? Nay, where do they find that the *Scripture* saith, that *there is nothing lawful in Divine worship, but what is prescrib'd*; or that *what is not commanded, is forbidden*? Where are we told, that God will be angry with us for doing that, which he has not forbidden? Our brethren themselves will allow, that the time and place of God's worship may be prescrib'd by authority; and why then may not necessary circumstances, such as gestures and habits, be thus determin'd, tho' they be not commanded? Certainly the command of a lawful power does not make that unlawful, which was not forbidden, and by consequence was lawful before.

They say indeed, that *Nadab and Abihu* sinn'd, because they offer'd *strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not*, &c. *Lev. 10. 1, &c.* and therefore there must be a command to make any thing  
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lawful in divine worship. But to this I answer, that the phrase *not commanded* is constantly apply'd to such things as are *absolutely forbidden*. The fire also is call'd *strange*; which phrase when apply'd to matters of worship, signifies as much as *forbidden*. Thus *strange incense*, Exod. 30. 9, 34. is such as was forbidden, because it was not rightly made; *strange vanities* is but another word for *strange Gods*, Jer. 8. 19. and thus the fire of these Men was *strange*, that is *forbidden fire*. For there was scarce any thing belonging to the Altar, of which more is said than of the fire burning upon it. Lev. 9. 24. & 6. 12. & 16. 12. 'Twas lighted from Heaven, and was to be always burning. When atonement was to be made by incense, the coals were to be taken from thence, and therefore surely 'twas peculiar to those offices. Nay, just after the account of the extraordinary way of lighting the fire, follows this relation of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, to shew wherein they offended. For before it was the office of *Aaron's* Sons to put fire upon the Altar; and now they suffer'd for attempting to do as formerly, because Heaven had declar'd to the contrary. There was also a Conformity between the punishment and the sin; for as fire from the Lord consum'd the burnt offering, so fire from the Lord consum'd them. So that their case seems like that of *Uzzah*, 1 Chron. 13. 7, 10. & 15. 2. for they acted contrary to God's command. I may add, that in other places also the phrase *not commanded* is apply'd to things forbidden; such as are call'd abominations, that is, idolatrous worship, false Prophets, &c. Deut. 17. 3. 4. Jer. 7. 31. & 19. 5. & 32. 35. So that since the phrase is always spoken of things plainly forbidden, 'tis a sign, that 'tis rather God's forbidding that made them unlawful, than his not commanding.

But, say they, why should the phrase be us'd at all in such matters, if *not commanded* is not the same as forbidden? To this I answer, that *not commanded* is only a softer way of speaking, which is usual in all languages, and frequently to be met with in *Scripture*. Thus God says, that hypocrites chuse *that in which I delighted not*, *Is.* 66. 4. that is, *their abominations*, as we read, *v.* 3. So the Apostle says, the *Gentiles* did *things not convenient*, *Rom.* 1. 28, 29. that is, envy, murder, &c. And the phrase *not commanded* is of the like kind, when the things it's apply'd to, are alike abominable. Besides, if *not commanded* be the same as *forbidden*, then the very notion of indifferent things is destroy'd, and there is no indifferent thing in the World; because a thing indifferent is, as I said before, that which is neither commanded nor forbidden.

But 'tis said, that all things not commanded in God's Word are additions to it; and that such additions are unlawful, because God says, *ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it*, *Deut.* 4. 2. and the *Scribes* are condemn'd, *Matth.* 15. 9. because they taught *for doctrines the Commandments of Men*. Now to this I reply, that if by *adding to the Word* they mean doing what the Word forbids; or appointing somewhat else instead of what God has appointed; or expounding away the design of the Word; or making that which is not the Word of God, to be of equal Authority with it, as the *Scribes* did; or giving the same efficacy to human institutions as God do's to his; if I say by *adding to the word* they mean any of these things, we think that *adding to the word* is unlawful. And if by *diminishing* they mean neglecting what the Word requires, or thinking God's institutions not com-  
pleat;

pleat ; we think that *diminishing from the Word* is unlawful. But if they say, that doing any thing *not commanded* in the Worship of God, tho' it have none of the ingredients before spoken of, is a sinful *adding to the Word* ; we therein differ from them. 1. Because Christ and his Apostles and all Churches have done things not commanded. 2. Because this destroys the nature of indifferent things ; which cannot be *indifferent*, if they be sinful additions to God's Word. Besides, *adding* is adding to the Substance, and *diminishing* is diminishing from the Substance ; so that when the Substance remains intire without debasement or corruption, it cannot be call'd an addition or diminution in the *Scripture* sense. However, our Adversaries themselves are really guilty of what they charge upon us ; for they forbid, as absolutely unlawful, to use any thing in the worship of God, which is not prescrib'd : and certainly he that forbids what the *Scripture* do's not forbid, do's as much add to it, as he that commands what the *Gospel* doth not command.

As for the Words of the 2d Commandment, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c.* Exod. 20. 4. they do by no means prove, that we must worship God by no other Religious Rites, than what he has prescrib'd. 'Tis true, we are there commanded to worship none besides God, and to worship God in a manner suitable to his nature, and agreeable to his Will : but surely Rites instituted by Man for the Solemnity of God's Service, are not there forbidden. It has been said indeed, that *Ceremonies being invented by Man, are of the same nature with Images* ; but we must observe, 1. That Images are expressly forbidden, and Ceremonies are not. 2. That Images tend to debase God in the



thoughts of those that worship him after that Manner, but Ceremonies do not ; and therefore Ceremonies are not a breach of the 2d Commandment. Ceremonies are not Essential parts of Divine Worship, but only circumstances of it ; and certainly our Brethren cannot find fault, that such circumstances are us'd to further Devotion. For they themselves do plead for *sitting* at the Lord's Supper, &c. upon this very account, because they think such external circumstances do further Devotion.

But, say they, if there be not a Rule for all things belonging to the Worship of God, the Gospel wou'd be less perfect than the Law ; and *Christ* wou'd not be so faithful in the care of his Church, as *Moses*, who was *faithful in all his house*, Heb. 3. 2. Therefore as *Moses* laid down all the particular Rules for God's Worship under the Law, so has *Christ* under the Gospel ; and it is as dangerous to add, as to detract from them. Now to this I answer, that the design of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is to compare *Moses* and *Christ*, or the Law and the Gospel, and to shew the exact Correspondence between the Type and the Antitype, and not to shew that our *Savior* had as particularly prescrib'd the Order of Christian Worship, as *Moses* had that of the Jewish. The Gospel is not so particular in the Circumstantials of Worship as the Law was ; and we must not affirm that it is, because we wou'd have it so. We cannot prove, that *Christ* has actually done this, because we imagin that he shou'd have done it. We may better argue, that since these things are not expressly determin'd under the Gospel, as they were under the Law ; therefore they are left to the determination of our Superiors, whom we are commanded to obey. Nor are the sufficiency of Scrip-

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ture and faithfulness of *Christ*, to be judg'd of by what we fancy they shou'd have determin'd, but by what they have. Since we do not find in the *Scriptures* such particular prescriptions in Baptism as in Circumcision, nor in the Lord's Supper as in the Passover, nor in our Prayers as in the *Jewish* Sacrifices; therefore 'tis plain, that the sufficiency of *Scripture* and faithfulness of *Christ* do respect somewhat else, and that they are not the less for want of them. *Christ* was faithful as *Moses* to him that appointed him, in performing what belong'd to him as a *Mediator*, and discovering to Mankind in *Scripture* the Method and Means, by which they may be sav'd; and the sufficiency of *Scripture* appears in it's being a sufficient means to that end, and its putting Men into such a State, as will render them capable of attaining to it.

III. I am next to consider, *how we may know, what things are indifferent in the worship of God.* To this I might answer briefly, that in things forbidden by human Authority, the not being requir'd in *Scripture*; and in things requir'd by human Authority, the not being forbidden in *Scripture*, is a Rule, whereby we may know, what things are indifferent in the worship of God. But because things in their nature indifferent, may become unlawful in their use and application, therefore I shall add the following particulars.

1. Things are call'd *Indifferent* from their general Nature, and not as if they were never unlawful; for they are lawful or unlawful, as they are us'd and apply'd. 2. A thing may not be requir'd or forbidden by one Law, which is by another; and that may be indifferent in one state which is not in another; and therefore when we say a thing is indifferent, we must consider the Case and Law which

which it respects. Thus to discourse about common affairs is a thing indifferent ; but it is unlawful, when practis'd in the Church, and in the midst of Religious Solemnities. 3. As there are certain Rules, which we ought to respect in common conversation, and which even in that case ought to tie us up in the use of things (otherwise) indifferent : so there are some Rules which we must have a regard to in the administration of Divine worship. And as in common matters the nature of the thing, in actions the end, in conversation the circumstances, are to be heeded, *viz.* time, place, persons ; as when, where, before whom we are cover'd or uncover'd, &c. so in sacred matters, the nature of the thing, in the Decency and Solemnity of the worship ; the end for which it was appointed, in the Edification of the Church ; and the Peace, Glory and Security of that, are to be respected. By these Rules we are to judge of the indifferency of things in God's service. But because these Rules are general ; and Decency, Edification and Order are variable according as circumstances alter ; and because different Men have different Opinions of them ; therefore I shall give more particular Directions.

1. Some things are so notoriously agreeable or opposite to Decency, Edification and Order, that common Reason will be able to judge of them. Thus 'tis plain, that a tumultuous speaking of many together is less for Edification, and has more of confusion, than the orderly speaking of one by one ; and Service in an unknown Tongue do's less conduce to Edification, than when 'tis in a Language commonly understood. But, 2. There are other things which are not so evident ; and therefore for the clearing of them we may observe ;

1. That

1. That Decency, Order and Edification depend upon each other, and must not be consider'd afunder. And therefore we must not throw down the bounds of public Order, and bring all things into confusion, for the sake of Edification, or because we think any matter indecent. What is against public Order and Practise, is for that reason indecent, were there no other reason to make it so. So that if we wou'd judge aright of either of these, we must judge of them together; and as Order alone is not enough to make a thing Decent, which is in it self indecent; so Decency or particular Edification is not enough to recommend that, which cannot be introduced without the disturbance of public Order.

2. That when the case is not apparent, we shou'd rather judge by what is contrary, than by what is agreeable to the rules. We know better, what things are not, than what they are; and therefore, since we better know what is indecent than decent, disorderly than orderly, against Edification than for it, 'tis best to take this course in judging about it. As for instance, if we wou'd inquire into the decency of the posture to be us'd in the Lord's Supper, or the Edification that may arise from it; it may not perhaps be easy for a Man to judge of the greater Decency and Edification of *kneeling* or *sitting*: but if he find that the posture injoin'd is not indecent or destructive of Piety, and of the ends for which the ordinance was instituted, he is therewith to satisfy himself. *If, says St. Austin, Epist. 118. what is injoin'd be not against Faith or good manners, it is to be accounted indifferent*; and I may add, if it be not indecent, disorderly and destructive of Piety, 'tis lawful.

3. That

3. That if the case be not apparent, and we cannot easily find out how the things injoin'd are decent, &c. we are obliged to be cautious how we condemn an action, which those Men practise whom for other things we cannot condemn. When we find that they argue, and produce Experience and Reason for it, and we have a whole Church against our Opinion, we shou'd be apt to think the fault may be in our selves ; and that 'tis for want of understanding and insight, for want of use and Tryal, and by reason of some prejudices, that we thus differ in our judgment from them. We see what little things determin Men ordinarily in these matters, how addicted they are to their own ways and customs ; and therefore we shou'd think again. So may we be reconcil'd to the rites of a Church, as we are to the customs and habits of a Nation, which at first seem as indecent, as the Ceremonies of a Church can do. In short, we have reason to suspect, 'tis a *Zeal without knowledge*, when we presume to set our Judgment, Reason and Experience against the Judgment, Reason and Experience of the Christian World.

IV. I am now to shew in the last place, *how we are to determin our selves in the use of indifferent things, with respect to the worship of God.*

1. Then, as particular Persons, solitary and alone, we may forbear to use what is indifferent, when no Law of Man requires it ; and we may freely use it, when no Law of Man forbids it. 2. In our conversation with others we must so use our Liberty, as shall be less to the prejudice, and more to the benefit, of those we converse with. We may act or forbear in compliance with Persons of weaker Judgment. But 3. as we are Members of a Church, we are to obey the commands of it. For if the  
not

not grieving a Brother or endangering his Soul oblige us to restrain the exercise of our Liberty, much more do's the Peace of the Church oblige us to the same. *Let every one please his neighbour, for his good to Edification*, Rom. 15. 2. that is, to his improvement in Knowledge, Grace, or Piety, and the promoting of Concord and Charity. Now Edification is chiefly so with respect to the whole, as the Church is *the House of God*, 1 Pet. 2. 5. and every Christian is a Stone of it, and therefore ought to study what may be for the Edification of the whole. And how is that, but by promoting Love, Peace and Order, and taking care to preserve it? For so we (e) find Peace and Edifying, Comfort and Edification, Union and Edification join'd together, as the one promotes the other. And therefore as the good and Edification of the Church is to be always in our Eye; so 'tis the Rule by which we ought to act in all things lawful; and to that end we shou'd comply with its customs, observe its directions, and obey its orders, without reluctancy and opposition.

*If any Man seem, or have a mind to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God*; 1 Cor. 11. 16. Whatever might be urg'd, the *Apostle* concludes, *we have no such Custom, &c.* The Peace of the Church is to a peaceable mind sufficient to put an end to all disputes about it; and since the Peace of the Church depends upon the observation of its customs, that is infinitely to be preferr'd before scrupulosity and niceness, or a mere inclination to a contrary practise. There must be somewhat establish'd; and *the very change*

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(e) 1 Cor. 14. 26. 2 Cor. 10. 8. 1 Tim. 1. 4. Rom. 14. 19. 1 Thess. 5. 11. Eph. 4. 12, 16.

*of a custom, tho' it may happen to profit, yet doth disturb by its Novelty, saies St. Austin, Epist. 118. Infirmary in a Church is better than confusion; and in all things which neither we nor the worship are the worse for, but the Church the better for observing, Peace and Order are to be preferr'd far before niceties; and certainly neither we nor the service of God can be the worse for what God has concluded nothing in. In a word, what St. Austin and his Mother receiv'd from St. Ambrose, is worthy to be recommended to all, That in all things not contrary to Truth and good Manners, it becomes a good and prudent Christian to practise according to the custom of the Church where he comes, if he will not be a Scandal to them, nor have them to be a Scandal to him. Epist. 118, & 86.*

And if the custom and practice of a Church must oblige a good Man; much more ought it so to do, when 'tis Establish'd by Law, and back'd by Authority. For then to stand in opposition, is not only an Offence but an Affront; 'tis to contend, whether we or our Superiors shall Govern; and what can be the issue of such a temper, but distraction? 'Tis pleaded, that *there should be a Liberty left to Christians in things undetermin'd in Scripture*; but there are things which they must agree in, or else there can be nothing but confusion. For instance, what Order can there be, if Superiors may not determin, whether Prayers shall be long or short, and the like? To conclude, when the Scripture do's neither require nor forbid an action, we ought to obey the Orders of the Church in the performance or omission of it.

But 'tis said, That if we be restrain'd in the use of indifferent things, we are also restrain'd in our Christian Liberty, which the Apostle exhorts us to  
*stand*

*stand fast in*, Gal. 5. 1. Now to this I answer;  
 1. This is no Argument to those that say, there is nothing indifferent in the worship of God; for then there is no matter of Christian Liberty in it.  
 2. A restraint of our Liberty, or receding from it, is of it self no violation of it. The most scrupulous persons plead, that the strong ought to bear with the weak, and give them no offence by indulging that Liberty, which others are afraid to take; and why, I pray, is a Man's Liberty more damag'd, when restrain'd by Superiors, than when 'tis restrain'd by another's Conscience? It it be said, that the Superior's command restrains it perpetually; I answer, that the case is still the same; for the Apostle, who knew his own Liberty, supposes that it wou'd not be damnyfy'd, tho' it were restrain'd for his whole life. For, saies he, *if Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth*; 1 Cor. 8. 13. and this he wou'd not have said, had he not thought it consistent with *standing fast in that Liberty, &c.*  
 3. *Christian Liberty* is indeed nothing else, but freedom from the restraints, which the *Jewish Law* laid upon Men. This is that Liberty which we are exhorted to *stand fast in*; and I think, that in obeying the orders of our Church, there is no danger of *Judaism*. But we must note, that Christian Liberty consists, not in our being freed from the act of observing the *Jewish Law*; but in being freed from the necessity of observing it. For the Apostles and first Christians did observe it for some time upon prudential considerations; but they did so, not out of necessity, but in condescension to their weak Converts. And if they cou'd observe some *Judaical Rites* without infringing their Christian Liberty; certainly we may safely use a few indifferent Ceremonies.

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From what has been said it plainly appears, that the use of indifferent things is no objection against living in Communion with our Establish'd Church; and this is enough to satisfy those Persons, who upon no other account, than that of a few harmless impositions, are guilty of separation from her. But because they have some particular objections against some particular things impos'd by her, therefore I shall not satisfy my self with proving the lawfulness of using indifferent things in general; but endeavor to satisfy all their scruples which relate to single instances, as I shall have occasion to treat of them in the following Chapters.

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### C H A P. III.

#### *Of the Lawfulness and Expediency of Forms of Prayer.*

THE next objection against our Communion is the use of *Forms of Prayer*. This the *Dissenters* judge to be unlawful, or at least not expedient; and they think it a sufficient excuse for their separation from us. I shall therefore in this Chapter endeavor to rectify their mistakes; 1. By shewing that *both Scripture and Antiquity do warrant Forms of Prayer*. 2. By answering their objections against Forms of Prayer. And 3. by proving that *the imposition of Forms of Prayer may be lawfully comply'd with*.

First then, I shall shew, that *both Scripture and Antiquity do warrant Forms of Prayer*. The *Dissenters* indeed require us to produce some positive command of Scripture for the use of *Forms of Prayer*; but this is needless, because I have shewn in the fore-

foregoing Chapter, that things not commanded may be lawfully us'd in Divine Worship. However, for their full satisfaction, I shall endeavor to prove these *Two* things ;

1. That *some Forms of Prayer* are commanded in *Holy Scripture*.

2. That tho' no Forms were commanded, yet Forms are as Lawful as *extempore* Prayers.

I. Then, *some Forms of Prayer* are commanded in *Holy Scripture*. I do not say that God's Word commands us to use none but Forms ; but I affirm that several Forms of Prayer are injoin'd in Gods Word. Thus *Numb. 6. 23, &c.* the Priest is commanded to Pray for the People in this very Form of Words, *The Lord bless thee, &c.* And *Deut. 21. 7, 8.* the People are injoin'd to say, *Be merciful, O Lord, &c.* and *26. 13, &c.* *I have brought, &c. Look down from thy Holy, &c.* David also by Divine inspiration appointed the Book of *Psalms* for the public service, as appears by the Titles of many of them. And tho' some of them have no Titles at all, yet we find they were deliver'd by *David* into the hands of *Asaph* and his Brethren for Forms of Praise and Thanksgiving, *1 Chron. 16. 7.* and accordingly *Hezekiah* commanded the *Levites* to make use of them, *2 Chron. 29. 30.* This Liturgy also was renew'd by *Ezra*, *Ezr. 3. 10, 11.* Besides our Savior saies, *When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.* in which he do's as plainly prescribe that very Form, as 'tis possible. Nay, had he said, *use this Form*, it cou'd not have been more expressive of his intention to impose it as a Form.

If it be said, that the Lord's Prayer is not a Form, but only a Pattern or Directory of Prayer ; because our Savior, *Matt. 6. 9.* commanded his Disciples to Pray *after this manner, Our Father, &c.* I an-

swer, 1. When the same matter is mention'd ambiguously in one text, and plainly in another, then the doubtful or ambiguous Text must be determin'd by the plain one. Now *ἡμεῖς οὕτως λέγομεν*, Matt. 6. 9. may be as well translated *Pray in these words*, as *Pray after this manner*; but I confess, we cannot certainly know from that Text, whether *Christ* commands us to use that very Form, or one like it. But then the words, *Luke* 11. 2. *when ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.* are so express a command to use that very Form, that nothing can be plainer; and therefore the other Text must be determin'd by them. 2. Our Savior gave this Prayer not after the manner of a Directory, but of a Form. Had he design'd it for a Directory, he wou'd have bidden them to call upon God for such and such things: whereas he gives them a Form'd Prayer, and bids them say it; and we may reasonably suppose, that he intended we shou'd use it as a Form, since he gave it as such. 3. Tho' the words in *St. Matthew* were only a Directory, yet those in *St. Luke* are a Form of Prayer. For the former were delivered in the Sermon upon the Mount in the second year after his baptism; but the latter upon another quite different occasion in the third year after it. Therefore 'tis probable, that the Disciples understood those in *St. Matthew* only as a Directory; and requested our Savior afterwards to give them a Form. For, 4. the occasion of *Christ's* giving them this Prayer in *St. Luke*, was their requesting him to *Teach them to Pray, as John taught his Disciples*. For 'twas the custom of the *Jewish Doctors* to Teach their Disciples a particular Form of Prayer; and *St. John* had done the same, and the Disciples desire that *Christ* wou'd do so too. For neither *St. John's* nor our Savior's Disciples cou'd  
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be ignorant how to pray; but their request was, that *Christ* wou'd give them his particular Form according to the *Jewish* custom; and this Form he gave them, which we call the Lord's Prayer.

But 'tis objected, that supposing our Savior did prescribe it as a Form, yet it was only *for a time*, till they shou'd be more fully instructed and enabled to pray by the coming of the *Holy Spirit*. For, say they, before *Christ's* Ascension the Disciples had ask'd nothing in his Name, *Joh. 16. 24.* but all Prayers after *Christ's* Ascension were to be offer'd *in his Name*, *Joh. 14. 13. & 16. 23.* Now this Prayer has nothing of his Name in it; and therefore was not design'd to be us'd after his Ascension; and accordingly, say they, in all the New Testament we have not the least intimation of the Disciples using this Form. But this objection is of no force, if we consider the following particulars.

1. That our Savior has not given us the least intimation, that he prescrib'd this Form only for a time, and not for continual use. And if we may pronounce *Christ's* Institution to be null without his Authority, then Baptism and the Lord's Supper may be temporary prescriptions, as well as the Lord's Prayer. Whatever *Christ* has instituted without limitation of time, do's alwaies oblige.

2. That his not inserting his own Name into it, is no Argument at all, that he never intended it shou'd be us'd after his Ascension. For to *Pray in Christ's Name* is to pray in his Mediation, depending upon his Merits and Intercession for the acceptance of our Prayers: and therefore Prayers may be offer'd up in *Christ's* Name, tho' we do not name him. Thus without doubt the Disciples Pray'd in his Name, *Acts 4. 24.* tho' his Mediation is not mention'd. 'Tis true, his Name is not express-

sed in the Lord's Prayer ; because when he gave it, he was not yet Ascended, and his Disciples were not to ask in his name, till after his Ascension: but now that he is Ascended, we can as well offer it in his name, as if it had been express'd in it. Nay 'tis so fram'd, that now after his Ascension, when the Doctrine of his Mediation was to be more fully explain'd, we cannot offer it at all, but in and thro' his Mediation. For God is peculiarly *our Father* in and thro' *Jesus Christ*. And therefore *Christ's* not inserting his own Name, do's by no means prove, that he did not design it for a standing Form.

3. That tho' the *Scriptures* do not mention the Apostles and Disciples using the Lord's Prayer, yet this is no Argument either that they did not use it, or that they did not believe themselves obliged to use it. For we may as well conclude from the silence of *Scripture*, that they did not Baptize in the *Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, tho' *Christ* had commanded them so to do; as we may conclude, that they did not use the Lord's Prayer, tho' *Christ* commanded them to say, *Our Father*, &c. Especially if we consider, that those who liv'd nearest the Apostolical Ages, and so were the most competent Judges of what was done in them, where the *Scripture* is silent, did alwaies use this Form in their public Prayers, and believe themselves obliged to do so. Now that this Prayer was lookt upon as a standing Form, to be perpetually us'd, appears from *Tertull. de Orat.* *St. Cyprian de Orat. Dom.* *St. Cyril, Cat. Myst. 5.* *St. Jerom, in Pelag. 1. 3.* *St. Austin, Hom. 42. 50.* *Epist. 59.* *St. Chrysost. de Simult.* *St. Gregory Ep. lib. 7. cap. 6.* And to be sure, they who believ'd the Institution of it to be perpetually obliging, could

could not doubt, but that it was constantly us'd in the Apostolic Age. And methinks 'tis very strange, that had the Institution been temporary, the Church of *Christ* for Fifteen hundred Years, shou'd never be wise enough to discover it ; and it seems to me a very high presumption for us to determin against the constant belief and practice of the Church in all Ages, without the least warrant so to do, either from our *Savior* or his Apostles.

But it is Objected yet farther, that *tho' Forms of God's appointing may and ought to be us'd, yet Forms of Man's compofure ought not : and that we may as well appoint New Scripture for public instruction; because the inspir'd persons did so ; as we may appoint new Forms for public worship, because they did so.* But this objection also will be of no force, if we consider *Four* things.

1. That this Objection allows the prescribing of Forms to be lawful in it's own nature; for otherwise God must have done that which is unlawful in its own nature. Nay, our *Savior's* prescribing his Form was a tacit approbation of other Forms, that were prescrib'd before, and that not only by God, but by Men too. For the *Jews* us'd several Forms of human compofure in their Temple and Synagogues in our *Savior's* time, yet he was so far from disapproving them, that he prescrib'd a Form to his own Disciples; which Form, as Mr. *Gregory* has prov'd, he collected out of the *Jewish* Forms, in whole Books the several Parts and Clauses of it are Extant almost *verbatim* to this day. And certainly had he disapprov'd their Forms as evil and sinful, he wou'd never have Collected his own Prayer out of them. Since therefore our *Savior's* giving a Form in such circumstances signifies his approbation of other Forms, 'tis plain,

either that he approv'd what is evil, or that Forms are lawful.

2. That this Objection must allow the prescribing of Public Forms to be not only lawful, but also useful. For otherwise God, who always Acts for wise Ends, and uses most proper means, wou'd never have prescrib'd any Forms. And certainly what was once useful, is useful still. For 1. we are now dull and carnal enough to need Forms; and 2. our *Savior* has prescrib'd one to be us'd in all Ages, which he wou'd not have done, had it not been useful for the Gospel state.

3. That this Objection must also allow, that God's prescribing Forms by Inspir'd Persons may be lawfully imitated by us, provided we have the same reason for it. And therefore Governors may prescribe Forms as long as Forms are useful.

4. That tho' Governors may prescribe Forms after God's Example, yet they may not prescribe them as *Scripture*, or Divine Inspiration. For as Spiritual Governors must take care to instruct the People after God's Example, but are not obliged to do it by Inspir'd Persons: so they may prescribe Forms of Prayer after God's Example, but cannot pretend to do it by Inspiration. They have God's Example for doing the Action; but they cannot pretend to Inspiration in the doing of it without manifest falshood and presumption. And therefore, tho' God's Example will warrant for the one; yet it will not warrant them falsely to pretend to the other. Thus then it appears, that some Forms of Prayer are commanded in *Holy Scripture*; and that our Governors are Authoriz'd by God's Example to prescribe others, when they judge them useful.

II. Therefore I am to prove, that tho' no  
Forms

Forms were prescrib'd, yet Forms are as lawful as conceiv'd or *Extempore* Prayers. Certainly there is no command of God to Pray *Extempore*; and therefore Forms have a better claim to Divine Authority, than they. 'Tis said indeed, that wheresoever we are commanded to Pray Vocally, we are commanded to Pray in our own Conceptions and Words; but this is a great mistake. For certainly when God commanded Men to Pray by his own Forms, they did pray Vocally, tho' not in their own words. And here let me take notice, that *Dissenters* appropriate the Name of *Prayer* to Praying in their own words; and call the using a Form (not *Prayer*, but) *Reading a Prayer*. But surely the *Levites* did really Pray, when they us'd the words of *David* and *Asaph*; and so did the *Primitive Christians*, when they said the Lord's Prayer; and if so, then a Form may be truly call'd a Vocal Prayer. For Vocal Prayer consists in the speaking of our devout affections to God; whether with, or without a Form.

But they pretend, that whatsoever instances there may be of Forms in Old times, God has declar'd in the *New Testament*, that it is his Will; we shou'd Pray by our own gift of utterance for the future. Now methinks, had it been the Will of God, that we shou'd not Pray by Forms; 'tis very strange that in all the *New Testament* there shou'd be no express prohibition of it. Especially since I have prov'd, that the *Jews* had Forms, and *Philo de Victim.* p. 483. and the *Modern Rabbins* own the same; they were also a People most tenacious of their customs, and therefore needed to be forbidden the use of Forms; had bur Lord design'd to exclude them out of his Worship. Nay, the *Essenes*, who of all the Sects of the *Jews*, did most readily embrace Christianity, had cer-



tain Forms of Prayer, as *Josephus* observes, *De Bell. Jud.* l. 2. c. 7. p. 783. Now when those that were most likely to receive the Christian Faith, were so addicted to Forms, can we imagin, that had *Christ* intended they shou'd use them no longer, he wou'd not have given them exprefs warning of them? But when instead of so doing, he bids them say, *Our Father*, &c. how cou'd they think, but that he design'd they shou'd still use a Form, as they did before? Were not that his design, 'tis strange, that he took no care to undeceive them.

But that I may fully prove, that the *Scripture* does not command us to Pray without a Form; I shall examin the reasons for which the *Dissenters* think it do's. God, say they, has promis'd us an ability to utter our minds in Vocal Prayer, and therefore to Pray by Forms of other Men's composure is contrary to his intention. But I shall afterwards prove, that this ability, which they pretend is promis'd for the purpose of Vocal Prayer, is a common gift, which God has no more appropriated to Prayer, than to any other end of utterance and elocution; and that therefore to omit the using it in Prayer, is no more contrary to the intention of God, than to omit the using it upon any other just and lawful occasion. However, because they urge some places of *Scripture* to prove, that 'tis design'd merely for Vocal Prayer, I shall therefore consider them.

1. They urge *Zech.* 12. 10. *I will pour out upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplications.* The Hebrew word, translated *supplications*, do's always (say they) denote Vocal Prayer, and therefore pouring out the Spirit of supplications must imply communicating an ability to pray Vocally. To this  
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I answer, that the word is no more restrain'd to Vocal Prayer, than any other word that signifies *Prayer* in *Scripture*. 'Tis true we read, *Psal.* 28. 2. *Hear the voice of my Supplication, when I cry unto thee*; but the *Voice of my Supplication* do's not necessarily denote Vocal Prayer. For 'tis a Hebraism, and may signify no more than *my Supplication* or Prayer. For so *Gen.* 4. 10. 'tis said, *The Voice of thy Brother's Blood cries*, &c. Now the blood had no real voice to cry with, but cry'd just as mental Prayer do's. In other places the word signifies both mental and Vocal Prayer indifferently, *Psal.* 86. 6. & 6. 9. or Prayer in general, *Jer.* 31. 9. But suppose the Word were always us'd for Vocal Prayer, yet surely the Promise of *pouring out the Spirit of Supplications* intends a much greater good than the gift of *extempore* utterance in Prayer, of which bad Men may have a greater share than the most devout. And what is the greater good, but the gift of Heavenly affections in Prayer? If it be urg'd, that God *has sent forth the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba Father*, *Gal.* 4. 6. and that *we have receiv'd the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father*, *Rom.* 8. 15. and that these Texts prove us to be enabled to pray Vocally by the Spirit, and that therefore we ought not to pray by Forms: I answer, 1. That if these words oblige us to cry Vocally to God by our own gifts, then we are equally obliged in all our Vocal Prayers to cry to him in these words, *Abba Father*; because that is the cry which the Spirit enables us to make, and the Text is every whit as express for one as for the other. 2. I deny that *crying* here do's necessarily denote Vocal Prayer. For how often do we find the word apply'd to things that have no Voice at all? Thus *the stones would immediately cry out*, *Luke* 19. 40. and

and the Labourers hire is said to cry to God, *James* 5. 4. And indeed crying to God has the same latitude with Prayer, which includes both Vocal and Mental. 3. Suppose that crying *Abba Father* by the Spirit, signifies Vocal Prayer; yet all that can be gather'd from it is only this, that when we Pray Vocally, we are enabled by the *Holy Spirit* to address our selves to God with assurance, as to a merciful Father, and this we may as well do in a *Form* as otherwise. For if we never cry *Abba Father* by the Spirit, but when we word our own Prayers, we can no more be said to do it when we join with a public *Extempore* Prayer, than when we join with a public *Form*, because we word our own Prayers in neither.

'Tis true, the *Scripture* speaks of a gift of utterance, which, say they, was given for Praying as well as Preaching; but I answer, that the gift of utterance was miraculous and particular to the Primitive Ages. This gift, says Saint *Chrysostom*, *Hom.* 24. ad *Eph.* c. 6. is that which *Christ* promis'd; *Mark* 13. 11. by which the Disciples spake without premeditation, and what they spake was the inspir'd Word of God; and this Gift no *sober Dissenter* will pretend to. The *Apostles* began to speak with tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance, *Act.* 2. 4. and the *Dissenters* may as well pretend to the gift of Tongues, as that of Utterance, they being both extraordinary.

But say they, tho' all Men have not the Gift of Praying *Extempore*, yet some have; and therefore God requires such to Pray by their gifts and not by a *Form*. For he requires them not to neglect the gift, *1 Tim.* 4. 14. but to stir up the gift, *2 Tim.* 1. 6. and to Minister the gift, *1 Pet.* 4. 10. and that having gifts, &c. *Rom.* 12. 6. and if Men are obliged to

to exercise their gifts in general, then they must exercise their gift of Praying *Extempore* in particular. Now to these things I answer, *First*, That the gift bestow'd upon *Timothy* was the gift of Episcopal power, which he is exhorted to exercise diligently. For at the first plantation of the Gospel, the *Holy Ghost* pointed out the Men, that were to be Bishops, as the (f) Fathers testifie. For this reason the gift is said to be given him by *Prophecy*. 'Twas given also *with laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*; and these two circumstances prove, that the gift was not the gift of *Prophecy*, but the gift of Episcopal Authority bestow'd upon him by imposition of hands at God's particular Appointment. And now I pray, how do's this Text prove, that we must use a gift of Vocal Prayer in our own words?

As for *1 Pet. 4. 10. Rom. 12. 6.* I answer,  
 1. That there can be nothing in them against Praying by a Form; for then they wou'd make as much against using the Lord's Prayer, as any other Form.  
 2. That the design of those Texts is to stir Men up to diligence in the exercise of those several Offices. *viz.* The Office of a Bishop, a Priest, a Deacon, and a Rich Man. For 'tis plain that the word *Gift* do's oftentimes signify an Office; and tho' it may be said, that the relief of the Poor is rather the exercise of an Ability than an Office, yet I answer, that 'tis properly the exercise of an Office, because the very having *Ability* do's as much put a Man into the Office of shewing mercy to the Poor, as if God had appointed him to it by a solemn Ordination. 3. Supposing that by these gifts were not meant Offices, but only abilities, yet

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(f) *Clem;* 1 Epist. ad Corinth. *Chrysoft.* in Act. 13. 2.

We are obliged so to exercise them, *that all things may be done to Edification*; for so the Apostle declares that those extraordinary Gifts, that were pour'd out in the Primitive Times, were to be us'd, 1 Cor. 14. 2, 6, 19, 40. as 'tis particularly plain by the instance of the gift of Tongues, *verse* 23, 26, 28. Now if we are not to exercise our gifts, but as they tend to Edification, then we must not exercise the gift of praying *Extempore* any farther than it tends to Edification. And since praying by a Form in public Worship do's (as I shall afterwards prove) tend more to Edification, than praying *Extempore*; therefore 'tis plain that we ought to suspend the use of the gift of conceiv'd Prayer. Thus, I hope, I have made it appear, that some Forms of Prayer are commanded in *Scripture*, and that those Texts which are urg'd against the use of Forms of Prayer, do prove nothing against them; and therefore I think I may safely affirm, that the *Scripture* do's warrant Forms of Prayer.

I proceed now to shew, that Antiquity do's the same. . This I shall do, 1. by answering those Authorities, which are objected by the *Dissenters* against the use of Forms in the Primitive Ages. 2. By proving that they were us'd in those Ages, by a short Historical Account of the matter of Fact.

1. Then, 'tis objected, *First*, that *Justin Martyr* saies, *Apol.* 2. p. 98. That the Minister at the Communion pray'd, *ὁν δύναμις αὐτοῦ*, that is, say they, *according to his ability*; from whence they infer, that in his daies the Ministers pray'd by their own gifts and abilities. To this I answer, that the words do signify *with all his might*, i. e. *with his utmost fervency*. For the same words are spoken of the People in the same Book, p. 60. who did not com-  
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pose their own Prayer at the *Eucharist*; and the same phrase is us'd in the same sense by *Nazianzen*, *Orat.* 3. 2dly, Because *Tertullian* in his *Apology* affirms, that Christians did pray *without a Monitor or Prompter*, because they did pray from their hearts; they think he alludes to a custom of the Heathen, who in their public worship had a Monitor to direct them in what words, and to what God, they were to pray. Now since the Christians pray'd without a Monitor, therefore, say they, they pray'd without any one to direct them what Form of words they were to pray in. To which I answer, 1. That *without a Monitor* cannot signify, without any one to dictate a Form of words. For in their public Prayers the Minister was the Mouth of the People; and therefore whether he pray'd by *Form* or *Extempore*, his words were a Form to the People. Whatever therefore this obscure phrase means, 'tis certain it cannot mean without a Form, unless it means without a Minister too. 2. It seems to me most probable, that by *without a Monitor* is meant, without any one to correct them, when either the People repeated or the Minister recited the public Prayers falsely. For (g) the Heathen Priests began their Sacrifices with a Form of Prayer, which began with an Invocation of *Janus* and *Vesta*, and proceeded with the Invocations of all the greater Deities, by name. Now that none of the greater Gods might be pretermitted, and (h) none of the Prayers falsely or disorderly recited or repeated, (i) one Priest read out of a Ritual, and another was appointed for a public Monitor to oversee and correct such mistakes as

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(g) *A. Gel.* Noct. Att. l. 13. c. 21. *Resin.* Antiq. l. 3. c. 33. (h) *Plin.* l. 28. c. 2. (i) *Liv.* l. 4.

might be made. When therefore *Tertullian* says; *We Pray without a Monitor*, his meaning is not, that we Pray without a Priest to dictate our Prayers to us, whether out of a Book or *Extempore*; but that we Pray without one to oversee, to admonish the Priests or People, when they dictate or repeat falsely. *Because*, says he, *we pray from our hearts*; that is, either by joining our affections and desires with the Priest without repeating the words; or by saying our Prayers by heart; so that we need none to correct us. For *Tertullian* affects to express the Greek; and therefore 'tis probable his *de pectore*, or *from the heart*, may be a translation of *ἀπὸ τοῦ θυμῆος*, which signifies to say by heart. So that *Tertullian's* words do rather argue for the use of Forms, than against them. The *Third* and last testimony against the Antiquity of Forms of Prayer, is that of *Socrates Scholasticus*, whose words, *Hist. lib. 9. c. 22.* they thus translate; *Every where and in all worships of Prayer, there are not two to be found, that speak the same words.* And therefore, say they, 'tis very unlikely, they shou'd Pray by Forms. But we must observe, that he had been speaking of the different ceremonies and customs of the chief Churches; and then concludes, *Every where and among all worships of Prayer, there are not two to be found, (not that speak the same words, but) that agree in τὸ αὐτὸ, in the same thing.* Where by *worships of Prayer* he means rites of Prayers, which the Churches differ'd in. And how do's it follow, that because they did not use the same rites and ceremonies of Prayer, therefore they did not use Forms of Prayer? For even now we see there are different rites and ceremonies of Prayer amongst those Churches, which do yet agree in using Forms of Prayer.

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2. Therefore I am to prove, that Forms were us'd in the Primitive times, by a short Historical account of the matter of Fact. 'Tis probable, that in the first Age there was a gift of praying *Ex-tempore* by immediate inspiration; and while this gift continu'd, perhaps there might be no other Form in public Worship, but only that of the Lord's Prayer. But 'tis probable, that upon the ceasing or abatement of it, Forms were compos'd after the method of those inspir'd Prayers. For 'tis most likely, that even from the Apostolical Age some part at least of the public Worship was perform'd in Forms of Prayer; because, so far as we can find, there never was any dispute among Christians concerning the lawfulness of Praying by a Form. For 'tis strange that, if Forms were an innovation, such a remarkable and public innovation shou'd be introduc'd without the least contest or opposition. For tho' some innovations did creep in; yet every one of that public nature always found powerful Adversaries to withstand it.

But not to insist upon probabilities, we'll inquire into matter of Fact. The Liturgies of Saint Peter, St. Mark and St. James, tho' corrupted by later Ages, yet are doubtless of great antiquity, and probably even from the Apostles times. For besides many things, which have a strong relish of that Age, that of St. James was of great authority in the Church of Jerusalem in St. Cyril's time, who wrote a Comment upon it even in his younger years; and 'tis declar'd by (k) Proclus, and the (l) Sixth general Council, to be of St. James's own Composure; and 'twas probably receiv'd in the Church of Jerusalem within 170 years after the

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(k) *Allat. de Lit. Sci. Jac.* (l) *Concil. Trull. c. 32.*



Apostolical Age. And that there are Forms of Worship in it as antient as the Apostles, seems highly probable. For *First*, all the Form *Sanctus corda* is there, and in St. Cyril's Comment, and the same is in the Liturgies of *Rome* and *Alexandria* and the Constitutions of *Clemens*, which all agree are of great antiquity; and St. *Cyprian*, who was living within an 100 years after the Apostles, (*m*) mentions it as a Form then us'd and receiv'd; and St. *Austin* tells us, that Form is *words deriv'd from the very age of the Apostles*. The same is asserted by *Nicephorus* of the *Trisagium* in particular, *Hist.* lib. 18. c. 53. 'Tis evident, that from that Primitive Age there was a Form of questions and answers prescrib'd in Baptism, from the questions and answers, which *Tertull.* De Resur. Carn. St. *Cypr.* 76. 80. *Origen* in Numer. Hom. 5. speak of. And if the Minister may be limited to a Form of question, why not to a Form of Prayer, there being as great a necessity to prescribe for the latter as for the former?

But that *de facto* there were Forms of Prayer, as well as Questions and Answers us'd in Baptism, *Clemens's* Constitutions affirm; and some of the Prayers are there inserted, l. 7. And that Christians did very early use Forms of Prayer in their public Worship, is evident from the Names given to public Prayers; for they are call'd the (*n*) *Common Prayer*, (*o*) *Constituted Prayers* and (*p*) *Solemn Prayers*; which last was the Title by which the Heathens distinguisht their (*q*) pub-

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(*m*) *De Orat. Dom.* (*n*) *Justin. Apol.* 2. *Ignat. Epist. ad Magu.* (*o*) *Orig. cont. Cels.* l. 6. (*p*) *Cypr. de Laps. scdm.* 14. (*q*) *Vid. Ovid. de fast.* lib. 6. *Stat. lib.* 4. *Senec. in Oedip. act.* 2. *scen.* 2.

lic Forms of Prayer; and consequently in the Language of that Age must signify a public Form: (r) St. Basil fetches the *Glory be to the Father*, &c, from the tradition of the Apostles, and cites it from St. Clemens the Apostles Scholar, and from Dionysius of Alexandria, who was living in the year 200, and Clemens of Alexandria, who was living in the Year 160, sets down these words as the Christian Form of Praising God, (s) *Praising the Father and the Son with the Holy Ghost*. So that this Form is older than the time of the *Arians*; for they are sharply (t) reprov'd by the Orthodox Fathers for the alteration of it. And indeed a great part of the Primitive Worship consisted of Hymns; which must necessarily be compos'd into set Forms. Tertull. Apol. cap. 2. and before him Lucian in Philop. and Justin Martyr also, Epist. ad Zen. & Seren. speak of their singing such Hymns. *They spend whole nights in watching and singing of Psalms*, saies Lucian; and Pliny saies, *that early in the Morning 'twas their manner to sing by turns a Hymn to Christ as God*; which Hymn was doubtless of human composition, there being no Hymn to Christ in Scripture of that length, as to take up a considerable part of their public Service. Eusebius tells us, that very early there were various Psalms and Odes compos'd by Christians concerning the Divinity of Christ (u); and that Paulus Samosatenus was condemn'd for suppressing those Hymns that were made in the Honor of Christ, *as being the composition of Men of late daies* (w); tho' in all probability those Hymns were compos'd within much

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(r) De Spir. S. c. 27. & 29. (s) Pædag. (t) Theod. Hist. l. 2. c. 24. (u) Euseb. Hist. lib. 5. (w) ibid. Hist. lib. 7.

less than an hundred Years after the Apostolical Age. But as for this Hymn which *Pliny* speaks of, it was earlier; for it cou'd not be much above ten Years after the death of *St. John*, that *Pliny* gave this account of the Christians to *Trajan*; and therefore to be sure, the Hymn he there speaks of, was us'd in the Age of the Apostles. About the same time, *Lucian* makes mention of a Prayer which they us'd in their public Worship, *ἀνὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου, beginning from the Father*; which doubtless was the Lord's Prayer: and of a famous Hymn added to the end of their Service, (x) which in all probability was the Hymn that *Pliny* speaks of. Since therefore the Primitive Worship did in a great measure consist of Hymns, which were Forms of Praise intermixt with Prayer, and some of these of human composition; this is an evident Testimony of the Primitive use of Forms. And doubtless, they who did not scruple praying by Form in Verse, cou'd not think it unlawful to pray by Form in Prose. Now that Praying in Meter or compos'd Hymns was a very early practise in the Christian Church, is evident from the Apostolical Constitutions, where it is injoin'd, *Let the People sing the verses which answer adversely to one another* (y): which way of singing was so very antient, that *Eusebius* (z) urges it as an Argument to prove the *Essenes* Christians, because they sung by turns, answering one another; and how cou'd they thus answer to one another in their Hymns and Prayers, unless they had constant Forms of Prayer? But that they had such Responsals in Prayer, is evident, because, when *Julian* for the credit of *Gentilism* wou'd needs dress it up

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(x) *Lucian*. Philop. (y) *Constitut. Apost.* lib. 2. cap. 5.  
 (z) *Euseb.* Hist. Eccles. lib. 2. cap. 17.

(a) after

(a) after the Order of the Christian Worship ; one thing wherein he sought to imitate it, was in their constituted Prayers ; that is, not in having constituted Forms of Prayer, for that the Heathen had before ; but in having such constituted Forms as the Christians had ; that is, as *Nazianzen* (b) explains it, a Form of Prayer to be said in parts ; for this way of Praying in parts *Nicephorus* (c) derives from *Ignatius*, who was a Scholar of the Apostles. All which to me is a plain demonstration of the great Antiquity of Forms. And that in *Constantine's* time, the Church us'd public Forms of Prayer, is evident from that often cited place of *Eusebius*, (d) where he tels us of *Constantine's* composing Godly Prayers for the use of his Soldiers ; and elsewhere tels us in particular what the Prayer was ; *We acknowledge thee, O God, alone, &c.* (e) which is a plain Evidence, that it was a set Form of words. If it be said, that this Form was compos'd only for the use of his Soldiers, who were a great part of them Heathens ; and that *Constantine's* composing it, is a plain evidence, that at that time there were no public Forms in the Church ; for if there had, what need *Constantine* have compos'd one ? To this I answer, That this Form indeed was compos'd only for his Heathen Soldiers ; for as for his Christian Soldiers, the story tels us, that he gave them liberty to go to Church (f). And therefore all that can be gather'd hence is, that the Christian Church had no Form of Prayers for Heathen Soldiers, which is no great wonder ; for if they had, it's very unlikely

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(a) *Soz. Hist.* l. 5. c. 15. (b) *Nazian. Orat.* i. p. 101. (c) *Niceph.* l. 13. cap. 8. (d) *Euseb. de Laud. Constant.* (e) *Id. de vit. Constant.* cap. 20. (f) *ibid.* cap. 19.

that the Heathen Soldiers wou'd have us'd it. But that they had Forms is evident, because he calls the Prayers which *Constantine* us'd in his Court, according to the manner of the Church of God, (g) *Authoriz'd Prayers*; which is the same Title which he (b) gave to that Form which he made for his Heathen Soldiers. And therefore, if by the *Authoriz'd Prayers* which he prescrib'd to his Soldiers, he meant a Form of Prayers, as 'tis evident he did; then by the *Authoriz'd Prayers* which he us'd in his Court after the manner of the Church, he must mean a Form of Prayer also. And since he had a Form of Prayer in his Court after the manner of the Church, the Church must have a Form of Prayers too.

'Tis plain then, that the three first Centuries had public Forms of Prayer; after which (not to insist upon the Liturgies of St. *Basil*, St. *Chrysostom* and St. *Ambrose*) we have undeniable testimonies of the same. See St. *Chrysost.* 2. ad Corinth, Homil. 18. St. *Austin* de Bapt. cont. *Donat.* lib. 6. and Concil. Carth. 3. c. 12. Concil. Milev. c. 12. *Justin.* Novel. 137. Pref. & 1, 2, 6. *Nazian.* Orat. in *Basil.* 20. saies, St. *Basil* compos'd Orders and Forms of Prayer: and St. *Basil* himself, *Epist.* 63. reciting the Manner of the public Service, that was us'd in the Monastical Oratories of his Institution, says, that nothing was done therein, but what was consonant and agreeable to all the Churches of God. Nay, the Council of *Laodicea*, holden about the Year 364, expressly provides, That the same Liturgy, or Form of Prayers, shou'd be alwaies us'd both Morning and Evening, Can. 18. and this Canon is taken into the Collection of the Canons of the Catholic Church; which Collection was establish'd in the General

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(g) Ibid. c. 17. (b) Ibid. c. 18.

Council of Chalcedon, in the Year 451. by which establishment the whole Christian Church was obliged to the use of Liturgies, so far as the Authority of the General Council extends. And then in the Year 541, these Canons were made Imperial Laws by Justinian, Novel. 131. cap. 1. See Zonar. and Balsam. on Can. 18. See also Smeđym. Answ. to the Remonst. p. 7. Grand. deb. p. 11. and Concil. Laod. c. 15; 19. Thus for near 600 Years after Christ we have sufficient testimony of the public use of Forms of Prayer.

And from henceforth, or a little after, down to Mr. Calvin's time, all are agreed, that no Prayers but establish'd Liturgies were us'd. Nay Calvin, who Pray'd *Extempore* after his Lecture, alwaies us'd a Form before, *Pref. ad Calv. Pral. in Min. Proph.* and he compos'd a Form for the Sunday-Service, which was afterwards establish'd at Geneva. Nay, he saies, *for as much as concerns the Forms of Prayer, and Ecclesiastical Rites, I highly approve that it be determin'd so, as that it may not be lawful for the Ministers in their administrations to vary from it; Ep. 87.* Nor is there any one Reform'd Church, but what has some public Form of Prayer; nor was the lawfulness of Forms ever call'd in question before. Nay Mr. Ball, Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Norton and Mr. Tombes do (i) expressly own them to be lawful; and *this is said (k) to be the tenent of all our (Dissenting) best, and most judicious Divines. It is very well known (saies (l) one)*

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(i) See Ball's *Trial*, Pref. & c. 1, 2, 3, 8. Baxter's *Cure of Ch. Divis.* p. 175. Owen's *Work of the Spirit in Prayer*, p. 220, 222, 235. Norton's *Answer to Apollon.* cap. 13. (k) Clark's *Lives of ten Divines*, p. 255. (l) Bradshaw's *Life in Clark's Coll.* in fol. p. 67.

that the flower of our own Divines went on in this way, when they might have done otherwise, if they had pleas'd, in their Prayers before Sermon; and we find Mr. Hilderſham's Prayer before Sermon (m) Printed. This was ſo univerſally and conſtantly practis'd, that Mr. Clark (n) tells us, that the *fiſt Man who brought conceiv'd Prayer into uſe in thoſe parts where he liv'd, was Mr. Sam. Cook*, who died but in the year 1649. Nay the chief Diſſenting writers do not only aſſert, but they alſo undertake to prove, the lawfulness of Forms (o) from the nature, uſe and end of Prayer; and charge the contrary opinion with Enthuſiaſm (p) and Novelty (q). They grant alſo, 1. That Forms are not only lawful, but that there are Footſteps of this way of Worſhip both in the Old and New Teſtament, as Mr. Tombeſ and others have ſhew'd (r), and Mr. Ainſworth (that did otherwiſe argue againſt them) do's confeſs (ſ). 2. That they are very antient in the Chriſtian Church. *The Chriſtian Churches of antient Times, for the ſpace of this 1400 Years at leaſt, if not from the Apoſtles Time, had their ſinted Liturgies*, ſaith Mr. Ball (t): and (u) they answer Objections to the contrary. 3. That in the beſt reform'd, nay, in all reform'd Churches, they are not only us'd and tolerated, but alſo (w) uſeful

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(m) See his Doctrine of Faſting and Prayer, Anno 1633. (n) Collect. of ten Lives, 4to. p. 38. (o) See Ball's Trial, c. 2. Roger's Tr. 223. Bryan's Dwelling with God, p. 307. Egerton's Practiſe of Chriſtianity, c. 11. p. 691. Edit. 5. (p) Grave Conſut. Epist. to the Reader. Contin. Morn. Exerc. p. 1006. (q) Prieſt, Serm. on Job. 1: 16. (r) Theodulia, p. 221. Baxter. Curc, p. 176. Ball's Tryal. p. 128, 129. Grave Conſut. p. 12, 13. (ſ) Annot. on Ex. 12, 8. (t) Tryal, p. 96, 106, 111, 138. & p. 80. (u) Tombeſ's Theodulia, p. 222. (w) Ball's Tryal, p. 108, &c. Rogers's Treatiſes, p. 224. Tombeſ's Theod. p. 234.

and expedient. 4. That those amongst us, to whom the use of the Common Prayer has been most burthenſome, have from time to time, profeſt their liking and approbation of a ſtinted Liturgy, as Mr. Ball assures us (x). 5. That they thought it altogether unlawful to ſeparate from Churches for the ſake of ſtinted Forms and Liturgies, is not only frequently affirm'd by Mr. Ball (y), but little leſs even by Mr. Norton, (z) who ſaies, *It is lawful to embrace Communion with Churches, where ſuch Forms in public Worſhip are in uſe; neither do's it lie as a Duty on a Believer, that he diſjoin and ſeparate himſelf from ſuch a Church.* And they give this reaſon for it, that then they muſt ſeparate from all Churches. So Mr. Baxter (a), *Is it not a high degree of Pride, to conclude, that almoſt all Chriſt's Churches in the World, for theſe thirteen hundred Tears at leaſt to this day, have offer'd ſuch worſhip unto God, as that you are obliged to avoid it? And that almoſt all the Catholic Church on Earth this day, is below your Communion for uſing Forms? And that even Calvin, and the Presbyterians, Cartwright, Hilderſham, and the Old Non-Conformiſts were unworthy your Communion?*

As for Praying *Extempore*, 'twas ſet up in England in oppoſition to our *Liturgy*. For in the Ninth Year of Q. Elizabeth, to ſeduce the People from the Church, and to ſerve the ends of Popery, one Friar Comin began to pray *Extempore* with ſuch fervor, that he deluded many, and was amply rewarded for it by the Pope. See Foxes and Firebrands, p. 7, &c. After him Tho. Heath did the ſame, p.

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(x) Tryal, p. 96, 106, 120. (y) Reſp. ad. Apol. c. 13. (z) Sacril. deſert. p. 102. (a) Deſenſe, part 2. p. 65. See Ball's Tryal, p. 131. Rogers's Tr. p. 224.



17. See also *Unreason. of Sep.* pref. 11, &c. And I hope when the *Dissenters* have well consider'd, whom they join with, and whose cause they advance, by decrying our Liturgy and extolling *Extempore* Prayers, they will see cause to think better of Forms of Prayer.

Secondly, I am now to answer the *Dissenters* Objections against Forms of Prayer.

II. They pretend, that the Use of public Forms do's deaden the Devotion of Prayer; whereas I doubt not to make it appear, that they do quicken Devotion much more than *Extempore* Prayers.

'Tis plain, that Forms of Prayer do fix the *Minister's* attention more than *Extempore* Prayers. For his matter and words being ready before him, he has nothing else to do, but to attend his inward Devotion, which is the life of Prayer; whereas Praying *Extempore* forces him to attend to the Recollection of Matter, and invention of expressions; which must more or less divert him, it being impossible to attend to several things, as closely as he may to one. 'Tis true, he that uses a Form, may permit his thoughts to wander; but then the fault is in the Man, and not in the Form; for he converts that which in it self helps Devotion, into an occasion of indevotion. He that Praies *Extempore* is more bound to attend to words; but he that Praies by Form, has better opportunities of attending to the proper business of Prayer, viz. Contrition, Sense of our Wants and dependence upon God, &c. And by being an example of these in his Prayer, the Minister do's very much excite the Devotion of the People.

But 'tis Objected, that while his thoughts are employ'd in inventing the matter and words of his Prayer, they are well employ'd; because they

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are attending to the duty of Prayer, tho' they be not so fixt upon the inward Devotion of it, as they might be in the use of a Form. To this I answer, that to invent the matter and words of Prayer, is not to pray, but to study a Prayer; which cannot be prov'd to be a part of our duty. But we believe, that when we pray devoutly by a Form, we discharge the *whole* duty of Prayer, tho' we do not invent the matter and words ourselves; and till we see the contrary prov'd, we shall alwaies think so. If it be said, that praying *Extempore* will not suffer the Minister's thoughts to wander; I answer, that if the Minister have Devout affections, they will keep his thoughts from wandring, when he praies by Form, as much as when he praies *Extempore*; but if he has not, he cannot utter his words from his affections either way.

But 'tis pretended, that praying *Extempore* do's heighten the Minister's affections more than a Form. Because, say they, in reading a Form his affections follow his words, and are rais'd and excited by them; whereas in praying *Extempore* his words follow his affections. But why may not a Man, who knows before hand what he is to pray for, be Devoutly affected with it, before he expresse it in a Form, as well as before he expresse it *Extempore*? And why may not he that praies *Extempore*, be as little affected with what he praies for, before he has exprest it, as he that uses a Form? May not a Man's Tongue run before his Heart either way? But suppose it true, that in *Extempore* Prayer the words follow the affections, and that in a Form the affections follow the words; do's it follow that praying *Extempore* heightens the affections more than a Form?

Form? Why may not the affections, *viz. desire*, &c. which follow the words, be as great as those that go before? Especially since our *Dissenters* say, that expressive words do naturally quicken affections.

If it be said, that the Minister cannot so well express his Devout affections in other Mens words, as in his own; I answer, that he is the Mouth of the Congregation, and that his business is, not to express his own particular and extraordinary fervors, as the common case of the Congregation; but so to speak, as every honest and ordinary Christian may join with him. For 'tis as bad for him to express such heights of Devotion, as few or none of them are arriv'd to; as to confess in their names such sins, as few or none of them are guilty of. Now the common sense of the Congregation may be as well express'd in another Man's words, as in his own; unless we suppose that *Extempore* words can more fitly express it, than those that are premeditated; which no sober *Dissenter* will affirm. But, say they, the Minister's Soul is so busied in reading a Form, that it cannot be so much affected, as when he praies *Extempore*. Now I leave the Reader to judge, whether being busied about the Matter, Method and Expressions of Prayer, do's not much more employ the Minister's Soul than bare reading; that is, whether he that can read a Prayer without the least trouble, cannot read a Prayer more easily, than invent one.

However, they tell us, that praying always in the same words, do's cloy the Attention of the *People*; whereas the newness and variety of conceiv'd Prayers do's naturally awaken their Minds, and keep them more fixt and intent. But  
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I answer, that the matter of public Prayer is, and for the main will be, the same ; and therefore if the matter fixt their Minds, 'twou'd as well do it in the same, as in new expressions. But if it be the Phrase, that their Minds are fixt on, there is nothing in it, but an amusement of their Fancies, which do's rather unfix them from the inward acts of Prayer, and distract their Devotions. Forms may be compos'd and pronounc'd as affectionately as *Extempore* Prayers, and may as well excite the Peoples Devotion ; but novelty of method and expression do's as much deaden the Devotion of those that are fixt upon it, as worldly Business. That seeming Devotion, that is rais'd by the jingling of words, is not Devotion, but Mechanism ; for a Man may be strangely affected with the words of Prayer, who has not the least spark of true Devotion to the matter of it ; but if the Mind do's affect the matter of Prayer for it self, and not for the sake of the words, I cannot imagine, how new words shou'd any way advantage its Devotion, unless they were to express new matter.

Thus it appears, that even what is urg'd in behalf of *Extempore* Prayers, do's plead much more for Forms ; but then there are sundry advantages peculiar to Forms, which *Extempore* Prayers cannot pretend to. For 1. People may consider the matter of a Form, and endeavor to affect their minds with it before-hand ; and so they may Pray with greater preparation. 2. People may join in a Form with more understanding, than in an *Extempore* Prayer, wherein the Minister is forced to use such expressions as come first to hand ; and sometimes he is forced to use a hard word, which half of the Congregation do not know, because

an easier do's not come to his Mind ; besides many other inconveniencies, which 'tis impossible alwaies to avoid. Now in composing public Forms more care will be taken that the words may be intelligible, than there can be in *Extempore* Prayer. And truly, if the words be not intelligible, the People's Prayer must be as much interrupted, as if the Minister spake in an unknown tongue. 3. Men may join in a Form with much more Faith, and Hope of being heard, then they can in *Extempore* Prayer. For they may be satisfied before hand, that the matter of a Form is good ; but they cannot be so satisfied of an *Extempore* Prayer ; considering that the Minister is many times a stranger, and may be perhaps Erroneous, Rash, Ignorant, &c. And even those Ministers whom they know, may sometimes mistake their Passion for their Zeal, and reake their Anger or their Faction in their Prayers, or let drop an Error, before they are aware, or express themselves so, as an honest mind may not be able to join. So that in joining with an *Extempore* Prayer, a Man must judge what is said, before he can consent to it : and if he meet with a rub, the Minister goes on in the mean time, and the Man is left behind at a loss, and perhaps confounded, before he can join again ; and no sooner perhaps is he well fixt, but he is troubled again with the same inconveniency : all which is easily prevented by the use of Forms. 4. Forms do not divert the affections of the People from the Matter of Prayer, as *Extempore* Prayers do, which disturb Devotion, whenever the Minister hesitates, or blunders, or expresses himself improperly ; for then some will be pitying, others condemning, others carping, &c. And if he perform well, some will admire

mire his Phrase, Judgment, Readiness, &c. all which things do call off their minds from the matter.

5. The Decency and solemnity of public Worship, which things are highly advantageous to the Devotion of the People, are better secur'd by Forms, than by *Extempore* Prayers, where they depend wholly upon the Minister. For if he happens to be a Man of a bad memory, or apt to blunder, or be dull, &c. then the Devotion of the Congregation may be turn'd into scorn and laughter; and of this I have seen too many sad experiments. But suppose him to be an able and pious person, yet he may be liable to indispositions of Body, dullness, inadvertency, &c. with outward cares and accidents; and if he be, he must many times pray confusedly, or with broken, indecent expressions, and omit a great deal of the matter. Sometimes he will be at a loss, and be forced to use fulsome repetitions; and how is it possible almost, but that a great deal of flat and empty nonsense, undigested conceptions and unadvised expressions, shou'd escape from his lips, before he is aware? And this, if he has a grain of modesty, must put him into greater confusion, and so amaze him, that he will be hardly able to recover himself. Now is it not a hard case that the Devotions of five hundred or a thousand Persons must be disturb'd by one Man's disorders? For they must either Pray after him, or not Pray at all. But all these evils are prevented by set public Forms.

6. Those that join in a Form, may be better secur'd of the reality and sincerity of their own Devotion. For they knowing before-hand the Expressions of the Form, are not so much surpriz'd with the Phrases; and therefore if they find themselves affected, may more safely conclude,

clude, 'tis the Matter and not the words, that moves them. Whereas a Man that is tickled with the words of an *Extempore* Prayer, may fancy himself to be very devout, when he has nothing of true Devotion in him. I might add more ; but I think these things are enough to convince an unprejudiced Person, that Forms of Prayer are so far from hindring, that they very much help Devotion.

But if any Man shall still object, that he finds by experience, that Forms do actually deaden his Devotions ; because his affections are flat and heavy, when he uses them, but he is almost transported when he hears a Man pray *Extempore* ; I beseech him to consider, whether his experience be not founded in prejudice, and whether his prejudice ought to prescribe to the whole Church. 'Tis certain, other Men find by experience, that joining with a Form do's help their Devotion ; so that here is experience against experience. Now since two contrary experiences cannot proceed from the nature of the thing, therefore one must proceed from the temper of the Man. Now I have prov'd, and many Men find by experience, that Forms do help Devotion ; and therefore if he do's not find the same, the fault must be in himself ; and I doubt not, but if he will consider the matter impartially, he will soon be of the same opinion. For we have *Scripture* and Reason on our side ; but he is led by his passions, which may be charm'd and flatter'd, and will betray him into strong delusions. 'Tis plain, 'tis not the matter of the *Extempore* Prayer, that affects him ; for that is the same as in a Form : and if he be taken with the chiming of words, 'tis but a sensitive delight ; and he

he must not make a Division in the Church, only to gratify his fancy. Besides, I desire him strictly to examin his Conscience, whether he has not often been as dull at a conceiv'd Prayer, as at the public Forms. If so, then the person is to be blam'd, and not the Form; and he is guilty of a double Iniquity, who divides the Church without sufficient cause, and charges his own formality upon a good and wholesome constitution.

2. They pretend, that *Praying in a Form of Words do's stint and limit the Spirit of Prayer*. But before I answer this Objection, it will be necessary to explain, 1. What it is that the *Scripture* attributes to the Spirit in Prayer. 2. What is meant by stinting or limiting the Spirit in Prayer.

*First* Then, what is it that the *Scripture* attributes to the Spirit in Prayer? I answer, There are some things attributed to him, which were Extraordinary and Temporary and others that were Ordinary, fixt and standing. The Extraordinary and Temporary were the immediate Inspiration of the matter of Prayer, and an ability to express it in known or unknown Languages. We read in the Old Testament of Prayers and Praises, which for the Matter of them, were immediately inspir'd. Thus pray'd *Hannab*, who as the *Targum* paraphrases it, *Prayed by the Spirit of Prophecy*, that is, by immediate inspiration. For Praying and Praising by immediate Inspiration are frequently call'd Prophefying; 1 *Sam.* 10. 5. *Numb.* 11. 25. 1 *Chron.* 25. 1. *Luke* 1. 67. For the matter of all those Prayers and Praises, together with those in the Book of *Psalms*, and sundry others recorded in *Scripture*, was immediately



diately dictated by the *Holy Ghost*. But after the descent of the *Holy Ghost* at *Pentecost*, wherein the gift of Tongues was communicated, 'tis certain, that not only the matter, but the very Language of their Prayers was immediately Inspir'd. This gift was peculiar to the primitive Ages of Christianity: because the Design of it was, not only to enable the first planters of the Gospel to perform their office in the Languages of the several Nations they were sent to: but also to be a sign from God, as other Miracles were, for the confirmation of the Gospel. *Tongues were for a sign——to them that believe not*, 1 Cor. 14. 22. and therefore since all Miracles were extraordinary, and after a time to cease, certainly this miraculous Gift of Prayer was so too.

However, because many *Dissenters* think it (not an extraordinary, but) a *Standing Gift*, which the Spirit will communicate to all successive Ages of the World; I desire them to consider, 1. That there is no promise of such a gift by virtue of the New Covenant, and therefore no Reason to expect the continuance of it; and 'tis presumption to promise ourselves, what God has not promis'd us. For as for the *Spirit of Supplications*, Zech. 12. 10. 'tis plain that 'tis the same with the *Spirit of Grace*, or of inward Piety and Devotion. But that there is no such promise in the New Covenant, is evident from what is acknowledged on all hands; viz. That there are many good Christians, who cou'd never pretend to any such inspiration. For all good Christians have a right to the Blessings of the New Covenant, and I am very confident, 'twou'd be look'd upon by all sober *Dissenters*, as a very rash and unjust censure, to affirm, that a man cannot be a  
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good Christian, who do's not pray by immediate Inspiration, but is always fain to depend either on his own invention, or a Form. 2. That as there is no Promise, so there is no need of any such immediate Inspiration. 'Tis true, the Spirit will assist us in all necessary things, wherein our duty and Spiritual Life are concern'd; but 'tis an unwarrantable presumption to expect an immediate Inspiration in Prayer, because there is no necessity of it. For, 1. As for the Matter of our Prayers, the Holy Spirit has already sufficiently reveal'd it to us in the Gospel, and as plainly instructed us what we are to pray for, as he can be suppos'd to do by any immediate Inspiration. And therefore, to suppose after all, a necessity of immediate Inspiration, is in effect to suppose, that We have neither reason enough to understand the sense of plain Words, nor memory enough to retain it. But say the Dissenters, *We know not what to Pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be utter'd*, Rom. 8. 26. and therefore we cannot in all cases know the Matter of our Prayers without immediate Inspiration. But I answer, that these words relate not to the Matter, but to the Manner of our Prayers. *What to Pray for as we ought, we know not*; that is, we know not how to pray with that fervency and resignation, *which we ought*, unless the Spirit assist us. 2. As for the Words of Prayer, there is no necessity they shou'd be immediately dictated to us, since we may use Forms; and those Forms (with small additions) may be adapted to all particular Cases and Circumstances. 3. If Prayers are Inspir'd, they are equal to Scripture, and are infallible and the

Word of God ; because whatever God inspires, must needs be so. But this, I am sure, no sober *Dissenter* will presume to say. 4. There is no sign of this immediate Inspiration remaining among us. Heretofore all Inspiration was attested by Miracles ; but the pretended Inspiration of Prayer has no Miracles to warrant it. Whereas if the Inspiration be continu'd, 'tis requisite that proper signs shou'd be continu'd, that so we may be able to distinguish that which is Divine from that which is Natural or Diabolical.

If it be said, that the *Scripture* is sufficient to distinguish them ; I answer, that tho' the *Scripture* may be sufficient to distinguish, whether the Matter of the Inspiration be true or false : yet 'tis not sufficient to distinguish the Inspiration it self, whether it be Divine, or Natural, or Diabolical.

For, 1. 'Tis certain, a Man may Pray agreeably to *Scripture* by Natural Inspiration, that is, by a Natural or accidental fervency of temper, as might be prov'd by many instances. And in this case how shall he know by *Scripture*, whether his present Inspiration be Natural or Divine ? 'Twill be said perhaps, that God inspires good Men with fervency in Prayer, and yet this fervency sometimes proceeds from temper of body ; and why do's not the want of a sign to distinguish, conclude against the Inspiration of fervency, as well as against the Inspiration of the Matter and Words of Prayer ? I answer, that we have a Promise of the Spirit's assistance for the fervency of our Prayers, but not for the Matter or Words of them. Besides, we may easily distinguish, whether the Inspiration of fervency be Natural

tural or Divine, by our own sense. If it be accompany'd with a fixt and constant Devotion of Soul, 'tis Divine; but if it be only a sudden fit, and leaves us habitually indevout, we have just reason to think it Natural. But we cannot distinguish by *Scripture* between one and the other; for both may be agreeable to *Scripture*. And can it be imagin'd, that had God meant to continue the gift of Inspiration to us, he wou'd have left us thus in the dark concerning it, without any certain sign to distinguish, whether it be from his Spirit, or from an ill affected Spleen, or a fever? 2. As for Diabolical Inspirations, we have sundry instances, such as *Wier*, *Hacket*, *D. George* and *John Basilides* Duke of *Russia*, who had such gifts of Prayer, as ravish'd the Auditors, and in the opinion of the most impartial seem'd to exceed the power of Nature, and made many think them immediately Inspir'd by God. Now since by such Inspirations the Devil may sometimes serve his own ends, by recommending false Teachers, &c. we may reasonably suppose he do's use that method. And since he may Inspire Men with such Matter of Prayer as is agreeable to *Scripture*, we cannot by *Scripture* certainly distinguish between his Inspiration and that of the Spirit. But surely 'tis blasphemy to think, that if God had continu'd this gift of Inspiration, he wou'd leave us without a sign to distinguish it from that which is Diabolical. And since there is no sign, we have all the reason in the World to think the gift is ceas'd.

But farther, we have not only no certain sign of the Divine Inspiration of conceiv'd Prayers, but many very *certain* ones of the contrary. I will instance in four. 1. The great impertinence,

nonsense, and rudeness (to say no worse) that are sometimes mingled with these *Extempore* Prayers, and which we cannot attribute to the *Holy Ghost* without blasphemy. 2. That they are so generally tinctur'd with the particular Opinions of those that offer them. Whether this be not so, I appeal to all the World; and if it be so, then surely they are not Inspir'd. For either we must suppose this gift of Inspiration, to be confirm'd to one party, which wou'd be to *stint the Spirit* with a witness; or else we must blasphemously say, the Spirit Inspires contradictions, and indites contrary Prayers to Men of opposite Parties. 3. Another plain sign that conceiv'd Prayers are not inspir'd, is, that that which gives them the reputation of being so, is not so much the Matter, as the manner of expressing them. As for the Matter, I suppose the *Dissenters* will not deny, but our Forms may equal at least, if not excell their conceiv'd Prayers: and therefore all the difference must be in the manner. But are conceiv'd Prayers the more Inspir'd, because the words are *Extempore*? Did God continue the gift for no other end, but that Men might ask those things *Extempore*, which they might as well have ask'd in a Form? Or are they more Inspir'd, because they do generally more enlarge, and express the same Matter over again in different words? Was the Spirit continu'd only to vary phrases? Our *Savior* forbids us to use vain repetitions (or as *Munster's Hebrew* reads it, to multiply words above what is fit and seasonable) thinking we shall be heard for our much speaking; and therefore these enlargements are so far from being signs of their immediate Inspiration, that supposing the Spirit to be of the same mind with *Christ*, they

they are generally signs of the contrary. 4. That extraordinary manner and way of expressing them, for which they are thought to be Inspir'd, ordinarily proceeds from natural causes, viz. Natural Enthusiasm or present fervor of temper. For, 1. The *Dissenters* confess, it comes upon them much oftener in their public, than in their private Devotions. And the reason is plain, because the passions of the Congregation do so excite their affections; and the reverence of an auditory obliges them so much to wreck their inventions, that their Spirits are many times transported into raptures. 2. They are not so fluent in the beginning, as when they have Pray'd a while; the reason of which is this, because the Spirits do not move so briskly, till they are chafed and heated with Labour. Then do they naturally raise the fancy, and render the invention more copious and easy. And certainly 'tis unwarrantable to attribute that to Inspiration, which do's so apparently proceed from natural causes.

Thus I have shewn, what the extraordinary operations of the Spirit are, and that they are not to be pretended to in these Times; I proceed in the next place to shew very briefly, what those ordinary operations are, which he has promis'd to continue to the end of the World. They are therefore the proper graces and affections of Prayer, such as shame, sorrow, hope, &c. But as for the expressions of Prayer, they are of no account with God, but as they signify to him the graces and affections of it. Now can any Man imagin, that those affections will be the less acceptable to God, because they are presented in a *Form*, and not *Extempore*? Will a Father deny Bread to his Child, because he askt it, to day

in the same words; that he did yesterday? Is God more taken with words, than with affections? Certainly his withdrawing the Inspiration of words, and continuing the Inspiration of affections, prove the contrary.

Now that God do's continue the Inspiration of Devout affections in Prayer, is manifest from *Gal. 4. 6. Jude 20. and Rom. 8. 26*, where the Spirit is said to *make intercession for us with groans, which cannot be utter'd*, that is, with most flagrant affections. For these Words do not, as some persons wou'd persuade us, prove the Inspiration of the Words of Prayer; because the Inspiration of those things, *that are too big for Words, and cannot be utter'd*, cannot mean the Inspiration of Words: but this Intercession of the Spirit signifies his exciting such affections, as make our Prayers acceptable. For as *Christ*, who is our Advocate in Heaven, enforces our Prayers with his own Intercession: so the Spirit, who is our Advocate upon Earth, begets those affections, which render our Prayers prevalent. And these are the standing and ordinary operations, which the *Scripture* attributes to the Spirit in Prayer.

*Secondly, Stinting or limiting the Spirit* is a phrase, that is never mention'd in *Scripture* or Antiquity; and therefore 'tis a *very new* Objection against Forms of Prayer, which I have shewn to be warranted both by *Scripture* and Antiquity. However, what the *Dissenters* mean by it is this; *viz.* that by confining our selves to a Form of Words, we (*stint or limit*, that is) restrain the Spirit from giving us that assistance, which he ordinarily vouchsafes in conceiv'd Prayer.

And now having explain'd the *Two* foregoing particulars, the answer to this Objection will be  
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very easy. For if the Spirit be stinted or restrain'd by Forms of Prayer, it must be either from inspiring the words, or from exciting the affections of Prayer. But I have prov'd, that Forms are so far from restraining the Devotion of Prayer, that they do very much promote and improve it; and as for the Words, I have prov'd, that since the first propagation of the Gospel the Spirit has withdrawn the immediate and miraculous Inspiration of them. And since that cannot be stinted which is not, therefore the Inspiration of the Words of Prayer is not stinted by Forms.

3. 'Tis objected, that public Forms are a sinful neglect of the Ministerial gift of Prayer. For, the *Dissenters* say, the gift of Prayer is an ability to express our minds in Prayer, which God has given to Ministers, as a means of public Devotion; and therefore they may not omit the exercise of it, by using Forms of other Mens Composure. Now to this I answer, 1. That supposing that 'tis a fault in Ministers to omit the exercise of their ability, yet the People are not to be charged with it. God will not reject the People's Devotion, because the Minister is to blame. He only is accountable for that; for the People do not join with him in his omission, but in that which is acceptable to God. 2. This gift of Prayer is either natural or acquir'd. For certainly 'tis not Inspir'd at Ordination; because the *Scripture* do's not promise any such thing, nor is there any experience of it. Nay, the Dissenting Ministers must own, that just before their Ordination they were as able to express the Devotions of a Congregation, as they were just after; which shews that they had no new ability to Pray Inspir'd in their Ordination. Now since this gift



or ability is nothing more than a quickness of invention and speech, which is either natural, or acquir'd by art and practise ; therefore 'tis no otherwise the gift of God, than our natural strength, or skill in History, or the like. All that God has promis'd his Ministers, is to concur with their honest endeavors, as far as is necessary to the discharge of their Office : and to suppose that this cannot be done without Praying *Extempore*, is to take the matter in question for granted.

3. This freedom of utterance is never call'd the *gift of Prayer in Scripture*. Praying in unknown Languages is once call'd a *gift*, but Praying in our own Language is never call'd so. Therefore 'tis plain that the gift of readiness of speech is not appropriated by God to Prayer, but left in common to all other honest uses, that it can be apply'd to ; and it may as well be call'd the *Gift of Pleading at the Bar, or of Disputing, or Conversation*, as the *gift of Prayer*. Accordingly we find, that those who have this gift in Prayer, have it also upon other occasions ; which proves, that 'tis not appropriated to Prayer. 4. Since this gift of expressing our minds is not appropriated to Prayer, it may be as lawfully omitted in Prayer, as in any other purpose which 'tis design'd for. For if it be unlawful to omit the use of the gift of Elocution, then he who has the gift, may not lawfully use a Form in Petitioning h's Prince, or in a Court of Justice ; but if it be lawful to omit it in these cases, as a Man sees occasion, then it is equally lawful to omit it in Prayer. In short, if a Man has two gifts, he may use which he pleases ; and since we have other means of Prayer, none is obliged to use his ability to Pray *Extempore*. 5. Using a Form is as much a means of public Devotion

votion as praying. *Extempore* ; because the end of public Prayer is at least as effectually serv'd by a Form; as by a conceiv'd Prayer. Now since there are two means of Prayer, and both cannot be us'd at the same time, therefore one may be lawfully omitted ; and consequently the use of a Form, which is one means, is not a sinful neglect of the other.

4. The last Objection is, that the common Cases and wants of Christians cannot be so well express'd in one constant Form, as in conceiv'd Prayers ; because the circumstances of Men are infinitely variable, and require suitable Petitions and Thanksgivings, which the Minister cannot otherwise provide than by Praying *Extempore*. To this I answer, 1. That the common Cases and necessities of Christians are for the Main alwaies the same, and therefore may be more fully comprehended in a Form, than in an *Extempore* Prayer. For public Prayers, which are offer'd up in the Name of the whole Congregation, ought not to descend to particular Cases, but only to the common Cases of all, and what every one may truly and sincerely join with. Now a Form will express them much better than an *Extempore* Prayer, which is subject to many omissions. 2. Forms can make as good provision for Extraordinary cases, as *Extempore* Prayer. For, as for those that can be foreseen, such as the want of rain, fair weather, &c. there may be Forms compos'd for them aforehand : and as for others that cannot be foreseen, Forms may be provided; when they happen ; and this has ever been done in our Church. 3. If Forms must not be us'd, because they do not alwaies reach *Extraordinary* Cases, certainly *Extempore* Prayers ought not to be us'd, because  
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by reason of omissions, they will not alwaies reach even *Ordinary Cases*. In a word, it appears that all *Extraordinary Cases* may be very well provided for by Forms; but supposing it otherwise, yet since it has been prov'd at large, that the use of Forms is upon sundry accounts of great advantage to the public Devotion, 'tis unreasonable to spoil the Church of them, and leave her to the mercy of *Extempore* effusions, only for the sake of a few contingencies, which may happen but very rarely, if at all, in a whole Age.

III. I am now to prove in the last place, that *the imposition of Forms may be lawfully comply'd with*; and for this a very few words will suffice. For since the use of public Forms is lawful in it self, therefore it may be lawfully comply'd with; because I have shewn in the *Second Chapter*, that a Man may lawfully do a lawful thing, when 'tis injoin'd by Authority. And now I hope, it is evident to all impartial Readers, that Forms of Prayer are not only lawful, but *expedient* also.

#### C H A P. IV.

#### *Objections against our Morning and Evening Service and Litany, Answer'd.*

**H**AVING justified Forms of Prayer in general, my duty and method oblige me to justify that of the *Church of England* in particular. I must confess, I have alwaies thought the *Liturgy* of the *Church of England* to be such, as wou'd rather have invited *Protestants* to our Communion, than have kept them from it. And I believe, if the *Dissenters* wou'd seriously read  
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over Dr. Beverege's Sermon concerning the Excellency and usefulness of the *Common Prayer*, they would go near to be of the same mind. But alas! this very *Liturgy* is that which many persons are incens'd against. It has been cry'd down as *Idolatrous, Popish, Superstitious, &c.* 'Tis true, we do not now so often hear those bitter exclamations of *Rome* and *Babylon*, *Baal* and *Dagon*; for the *Common Prayer* is not now esteem'd such an abominable thing, as some ignorant and heady Zealots were wont to count it: but yet some Objections are still insisted upon, to which I hope to return a fair answer.

I. Then 'tis Objected, that the *Confessions of sin* in our *Liturgy* are too general; and that there are many particular sins, which ought to have been *distinctly* confess'd; of which there is no mention. But I desire the Objectors to consider, that there is hardly any thing in public worship, which requires more caution and prudence in the ordering of it, than that confession of sin, which is to be made by the whole Congregation. 'Tis hard to prevent its being either too general or too particular. The reason is, because such different persons must join in it, and the sins of some are more numerous and grievous than the sins of others; so that all persons cannot possibly make the same particular confession. But I think our confessions, *viz.* the *daily* one, and that in the *Communion Office*, are so judiciously fram'd, as to avoid both extremes: and I am persuaded, all persons may profitably use them. However, the confession of sin after the Minister has recited each of the *Ten Commandments*, is as particular, as can reasonably be desir'd; and by this a Man may confess all his known offences in thought, word or deed.

deed. If a Man must not use a confession, that is possible to be mended, he must never confess at all: and if a Form of confession were compos'd by the wisest *Dissenters*, I suppose no more wou'd be pretended, but that it might be profitably us'd. Now this may be said of our Form, and ought to end the dispute.

Indeed there are examples of *Jeremiah*, *Nehemiah*, &c. confessing such sins as they were not guilty of: but this was done upon solemn humiliation for those known and public Idolatries of the Nation, which had brought God's heavy judgments upon them, or for common and scandalous transgressions afterward. They consider'd themselves as a part of the Community which had provok'd God; and they bare a part in the Calamity and in the confession, as if they had offended as greatly as their Countrymen. But I conceive there is a great deal of difference between those confessions upon such public humiliations, and those that are fit for the Ordinary Service of the Church.

I may add, that particular confessions are more properly the matter of private Devotion; and if we did seriously practise strict Examination and secret contrition in our Closets, we shou'd then find our affections prepar'd to comply with those more general confessions of sin, which we make with the whole Congregation. And we shou'd then have less reason to complain, that those confessions are too general and not apt to move us; because this wou'd cure the *deadness of our hearts*, which are commonly most to blame, when we find fault with the Means, that God has provided for us.

2. The next Objection is the *shortness of our Collects*,

*Collects*, by reason of which 'tis pretended, that the Prayer is often suddenly broken off, and then begun again : and this is thought not so agreeable to the gravity wherewith this duty ought to be perform'd, nor so likely a means of exciting Reverence and Devotion in the People, as one continu'd Form of Prayer, that might be as long as all those put together. To this I answer, 1. That the mere shortness of a Prayer is not to be blam'd ; since that wou'd disparage the Form, which *Christ* taught his Disciples. 2. That 'twill be hard to prove, that many of these short Prayers being offer'd up to God one immediately after another, is either not so grave or not so edifying, as one continu'd Form. For the work of Praying is as much continu'd all the while, as if there were but one continu'd Form ; because we pass from one Petition to another, or from one matter of invocation to another, as immediately as if the distinct Forms were all brought into the compass of one. Nay, the *attention* of the People is rather help'd by the frequency of saying *Amen* : and their *Godly disposition of mind*, which is the best thing in Prayer, may be kept alive and more effectually secur'd by calling upon the Name of God, and pleading the Merits of *Christ* so often as we do. Besides, the invocation of God somewhat often by his attributes, maintains in our minds a reverent sense of his Majestic Presence ; which we all know, is needful to make us pray as we ought : and the frequency of mentioning *Christ's* Merits and Meditation, strengthens, our Faith and assurance that we shall be heard. 'Tis also the peculiar Character of Christian Devotion ; and distinguishes us from the *Papists*, in declaring our detestation of calling upon God in the Name of Saints, or any other but

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that of *Christ*. If it be said that we say *Amen*, and break off our Prayers too often ; I reply, that all wise and humble Men will submit themselves in that case to the judgment of their Superiors.

3. Some except against the repetition of the *Lord's Prayer*, and of *Glory be to the Father*, &c. and of *Lord have mercy upon us*, and the like ; because they think our *Savior* forbids it by saying, *when ye pray, use not vain repetitions*, Matt. 6. 7. But it appears by our *Savior's* caution against *vain* repetitions, that some repetitions are not *vain*, and consequently not forbidden. This must be suppos'd, because he himself, when in his Agony, pray'd thrice in the same words. Now *Christ* forbids the fault of the Heathens, whose vain repetitions proceeded from an affectation of speaking much, or from a belief that God would not help them, unless they repeated the same thing over in a tedious manner : but the repetition of good Prayers is nothing like their practise. Repetitions are not vain, if two things be regarded ; 1. That the matter be very weighty, and apt to move those pious affections, which God is most pleas'd with in our Addresses to him ; and in this respect, I dare say, our repetitions are secur'd from vanity. 2. That they be fram'd with judgment, that they come in fitly and in due place, and not too often. And these rules are observ'd in our Liturgy ; for as none did ever blame the disposal of our repetitions, so none can justly blame the frequency of them. For our repetitions are very few ; but if our number be too great, what shall we think of the 136th *Psal*m, where *His mercy endureth for ever*, is repeated twenty six times ? To conclude this matter, I desire those, who do not yet approve our repetition

repetition of the *Lord's Prayer*, &c. to consider, whether it be so easy to spend the time it takes up more profitably, than by joining in good earnest with the Congregation in these Prayers.

4. Some Persons dislike the *Responsals* of the Congregation, and the People's saying the *Confessions* and the *Lord's Prayer* after the Minister, and their *alternate reciting* the Psalms and Hymns, and some petitions in the daily Service. Now I beg these Men to consider, what has been often said, *viz.* that this way is apt to check a wandering Spirit, to help attention and quicken a lively zeal in God's Service, whilst we invite and provoke one another to Pray and give thanks.

They say indeed, that the Minister is appointed to be the mouth of the People in God's public Service : but to this I answer, 1. That granting the Minister to be appointed for the mouth of the People, yet it must not be so interpreted, as to make all Vocal Prayer and thanksgiving in Religious Assemblies unlawful to the People. For then the People must not say *Amen*, which is a short responsal to the Minister ; nor must they join in singing of Psalms, which oftentimes contain matter of Prayer. 2. The *Scripture* do's not say, that *the Minister is the mouth of the People to God*, or that no Prayer must be offer'd up in Religious Assemblies, otherwise than by the mouth of the Minister. 'Tis true, the Minister is the mouth of the People in all those Prayers which he utters for them ; and because these are many more than what the People themselves utter, he may be said to be their mouth to God *Comparatively*, but not *Absolutely*. 'Tis true also, that the Minister is appointed for the People in all public Services appertaining to God, if this be understood for the  
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most part, or of all with little exception. Some public Services are pronounc'd by him only: and as for the rest, 'tis fit he shou'd ever utter most of them; and that in those wherein the People have their part, he shou'd ever go before and lead them, and guide the whole performance; which is all taken care for in our Liturgy.

Nay, the *Dissenters* themselves do not utterly debar the People from all Vocal Prayer and Thanksgiving of their own in God's solemn Worship. For they allow the People to sing Psalms; and why then may they not bear a part in the Hymns and Psalms by alternate responses? I cannot see, why singing or not singing shou'd make such a difference. 'Twere better, if they were every where sung; because it is more suitable to the design of them, than bare reciting is: but if they be not sung, the next use of them, that is most agreeable to their nature and design, is reciting them by answering in turns, as the Custom is with us; for this is much nearer to singing, than the Minister's reciting all himself.

But, say they, the People's verse is in a manner lost to some of the Congregation; since in the confus'd murmur of so many voices nothing can be distinctly heard. To this I answer, that those who can read, may bring Books; and those that cannot, may attend to those that are near. Nay, I have been credibly inform'd, that some devout People that cou'd never read, have attain'd to an ability of reciting most of the Psalms without Book, by often hearing them in those Churches where they are alternately recited. I shall add, that for the most part, the Psalms are recited alternately in those Churches only, where it may  
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Be reasonably presum'd, that the whole Congregation can read, very few excepted.

Now if the People may join in Vocal Praise, why may they not also join in Vocal Prayer? If it be said, there is some example or warrant in *Scripture* for the one, but not for the other; it seems to be a good answer, that there is such a parity of reason, as that the express warrant of *Scripture* for the one, is an imply'd warrant for the other. I have already shewn, *Chap. 3.* that the People's joining in Vocal Prayer was very antiently practis'd; and if this was the Primitive way, 'tis probable, that it was the way in the Apostles times. I know, 'tis objected, that the People's speaking to God in the Church is disorderly, and a breaking in upon the Minister's Office. But will they say, that the *Children of Israel* intrench'd upon the Priest, when *they all bowed themselves upon the Pavement, and worshipped the Lord, and prais'd him, saying, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever*; 2 Chron. 7. 3? Ecclesiastical Order is secur'd by the Minister's presiding in God's public Worship, and guiding the performance of it: but not to allow the People to make an *Audible confession of sin* after the Minister, nor to utter *some few affectionate Petitions*, and those very short, to which they are also invited and led by him, seems rather to favor of an affectation of undue superiority over the People, than to proceed from any fear of the Minister's Office being invaded. Some urge, that Women are forbidden to *speak in the Church*, 1 Cor. 14. 34. but this is strangely misapply'd to the Matter in hand. For 'tis plain that the *speaking* mention'd by the Apostle, signifies nothing but Propheying, Interpreting, Preaching and Instructing; and that the

reason, why he will not allow this to the Woman, is, because Preaching implies Authority, whereas the Woman's part is obedience and subjection. They that will read the whole *Chapter*, will find that this is the meaning of St. Paul.

5. I proceed in the next place to consider, whether there be any just cause to find fault with the reading of the *Apocryphal Lessons* in our Church. Now if *Sermons* and *Catechizing* be allowable, besides the Word of God; why may not some *Apocryphal Lessons* be read, which contain excellent Rules of life? Especially since those Writings were greatly esteemed by the Church in its purest Ages, when they and other human writings also were publicly read, as well as the *Scriptures*: and those *Chapters* of the *Old Testament*, which are omitted, do either recite *Genealogies*, or the Rules of the *Levitical Service*, or matters of fact deliver'd in other *Chapters* that are read, or which are hard to be understood. If it be said, that because the *Scripture* is all of Divine Authority, 'tis more profitable to read any part of that, than any other good Lesson; I answer, that then no place will be left for *Sermons*, which are no more of Divine Authority, than the *Apocryphal Lessons*. There is no danger of any Persons mistaking the *Apocryphal Lessons* for Canonical *Scripture*, because the Church speaks so plainly in her Sixth Article: nor do we read them otherwise, than the antient Church did. I shall only add, that no *Apocryphal Lesson* is read upon any Lord's Day in the Year; and as for other exceptions, I refer the Reader to Dr. *Falkner's Libertas Eccles.* p. 164, &c.

6. If any object against our *Standing at the Creed*;

*Creed* ; Mr. Baxter saies, *his judgment is for it, where it is required, and where not doing it wou'd be divisive and scandalous.* Nay, elsewhere he saies, *that 'tis a convenient praising gesture, &c.* See his *Christ, Direct.* p. 858.

I proceed now to the Vindication of the *Litany*, against which 'tis pleaded, 1. That *the People utter the Words of invocation in the Litany for the most part*, the Minister all the while *suggesting the matter of it to them.* But this Objection is of no force, if what I have said concerning the lawfulness of allowing the People an interest in Vocal Prayer, be admitted. If it be said, that the People bear *too considerable a part*, to the disparagement of the Minister's Office ; I answer, that 'tis a great mistake ; For 1. tho' the People say *Good Lord deliver us*, and *We beseech thee to hear us Good Lord* ; yet the Minister saies the *other*, and the *far greater part* of the Prayer. 2. They are but these Two short and known Petitions, which are excepted against : and if the People may be allowed any part in Vocal Prayer, I know of nothing more proper than these ; nor are they repeated, but when they are apply'd to new and distinct matter. Besides, they relieve our attention, and cherish our warm affections in Prayer : and I cou'd almost appeal to the meanest of our Adversaries, whether, if *Good Lord deliver us*, were apply'd but once in gross to that part of the Litany, we shou'd not be more apt to languish in the offering it up, than as it is now order'd. But, 3. 'Tis plain, that in those Prayers, the Minister has the principal and guiding part, in that he utters all the *distinct matter* of the Prayer, which the People do not ; whereas he utters words of *invocation* as well as they. And

consider, I pray, whether if the People were to utter that which is the Minister's part now, and the Minister to say that only which is theirs; we shou'd not have more grievous complaints, that the Minister's Authority was slighted in the whole design; since he seem'd only to learn from the People, what the Congregation was to pray for.

2. 'Tis objected, that we pray to be deliver'd from all deadly sin, which seems to imply, that there are some sins which are not deadly. Now in answer to this, it is by some truly enough said; that these words do not necessarily imply a distinction between sins that *are*, and sins that *are not deadly*. But admitting that such a distinction were intended, yet we must observe, that tho' all sin be in its own nature *deadly* or damnable; yet thro' the Mercy of God and the Merits of Christ, sins of mere infirmity are not imputed, and therefore not *deadly* to us. But there are some sins so heinous, that he who commits them, is thereby put into a damnable state: and 'tis of such sins as these that this passage is to be understood; as appears by *Deadly Sin* being added to Fornication, *from Fornication and all other Deadly Sin, Good Lord, deliver us.*

3. Some are displeas'd at our praying against *Sudden Death*. But why shou'd we not by *Sudden Death* understand our being taken out of this World, when we are not fit to die? For sometimes a thing is said to be *Sudden* to us, when we are not prepar'd for it. And in this sense can any good Man find fault with the Petition? But suppose that by *Sudden Death* we mean what is commonly understood by it, that is, a Death of which a Man has not the least warning by Sickness;

ness; are there not Reasons why even good Men may desire not to die suddenly? May they not, when they find themselves drawing towards their end, by their good Instructions and Admonitions make Impressions upon their Friends, Acquaintance, and Relations, to the bettering of them? May not their Counsels be then more effectual with them, than ever they were before? And is it not reasonable to believe they will be so? As for themselves, may not the warning they have of approaching Death, be improv'd to make them more fit to die, than they were in their perfect Health? In a word, he that thinks himself to have sufficiently *perfected holiness in the fear of God*, and not to stand in need of those acts of Self-Examination, Humiliation and Devotion, by which Good Men improve the Warning of Death, which great Sickness or Extreme Age gives them; let him, if he please, refuse to join with us, when we pray to God to *deliver us from sudden Death*.

4. Some are offended, that we pray to be deliver'd *By the Mystery of Christ's Holy Incarnation, &c. By his Agony and bloody Sweat, by his Cross and Passion, &c. And by the coming of the Holy Ghost*. Some say this is *Swearing*, others *Conjuring*, and I know not what. To these I answer, that when we say, *By the Mystery of thy holy Incarnation, and by thy Cross and Passion, &c. Good Lord, deliver us*; we implore Christ, who has already shew'd such an inestimable goodness towards us, by taking our Nature into his Divinity, to *Die upon the Cross, to be Buried, to Rise again, to ascend into Heaven, and there to intercede with the Father for us, and by sending the Holy Ghost to qualify the Apostles for their great Work of carrying*

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the Word of Salvation into the World : I say, we implore him who hath already done such mighty things for our Salvation, and we plead with him by that goodness which he has already given us such great demonstrations of, by those Wonders of Mercy that he has wrought for us; that he wou'd now go on to deliver us by his powerful Grace from those Evils which we pray against. And this is so reasonable, so devout and affectionate, so humble and thankful a way of praying, that I am sorry that any who call themselves Believers, shou'd be so ignorant as not to understand it, or so profane and unlike what they pretend to be, as to deride it.

To conclude, I must confess, that of all the Prayers in our Liturgy, that are of human Composition, I shou'd be most unwilling to part with the *Litany*. It seems to be, what it was design'd to be, *A Form of Prayer apt to excite our most intense and fervent desires of God's Grace and Mercy*. The whole Office is fram'd, with respect both to matter and contrivance, for the raising of the utmost Devotion of good Christians, and for the warming of the coldest hearts by the heat of the Congregation. And in such a disposition it is most fit to express our Charity, by praying for others, even all sorts of Men, as distinctly and particularly as public Prayer will bear.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Of Infant Baptism.

**B**Efore I proceed to the Vindication of our Office of *Baptism*, I think it is proper to justify *Infant Baptism*, which is practis'd by us, and dislik'd by some of the *Dissenters*. And that my Discourse concerning *Infant Baptism* may be the better understood, I shall take the liberty of premising a few things.

1. That the Original of the *Jewish Church* (consider'd purely as a Church) is to be dated from the Covenant which God made with *Abraham*; but that of the *Jewish Common-wealth* from the delivery of the Law by *Moses*. For that the *Jewish Church* and *Common-wealth* are distinct things, is plain, because the Apostle makes this distinction, *Rom.* 4. 13. *Gal.* 3. 17. And therefore,

2. The way to find out the Nature of the *Jewish Church* is to consider the Nature of the Covenant made with *Abraham*, upon which the *Jewish Church* was founded. Now 'tis plain from *Rom.* 4. 9th to the 17th, and 9. 6, &c. *Gal.* 3. 5, &c. that the Covenant made with *Abraham* was a Spiritual Covenant, made with him as the *Father of Believers*, and with his posterity, not as proceeding from him by Natural, but by Spiritual Generation, as Heirs of his Faith. Hence saies the Apostle, in the name of the Christians, *We are the Circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the Flesh*, *Phil.* 3. 3. and it is one God, which shall justify the Circumcision by Faith, and the Uncircumcision thro' Faith,



Rom. 3. 30. and if ye be *Christ's*, then ye are *Abraham's Seed*, and heirs according to the *Promise*, Gal. 3. 29. Nay, 'twill farther appear, that this Covenant was made, not with *Abraham's Natural*, but his *Spiritual Offspring*, if we consider,

3. That the initiatory Sacrament into it was *Circumcision*. For the Covenant is call'd the *Covenant of Circumcision*, Acts 7. 8. and *Circumcision* on the other hand is call'd the *Seal of the Righteousness of Faith*, Rom. 4. 11. faith or faithful obedience being the condition of that Covenant, which God requir'd of the Children of *Abraham*, and which they promis'd to perform. It also signify'd the *Circumcision of the heart*, Deut. 10. 16. and 30. 6. Rom. 2. 28, 29.

4. As to the Persons to be admitted into the Covenant, we have a very plain account at the institution of it, Gen. 17. from whence it appears, *First*, that the Children of Heathens were to be circumcis'd; (See *Exod.* 12. 48, 49.) which also proves that the Promise was made, not to his *Natural*, but to his *Spiritual Children*. Hence in all Ages great numbers of Gentiles were admitted into the *Jewish Church* by *Circumcision*. *Secondly*, that persons of all Ages were to be Circumcis'd, and that God was so far from excluding Children from *Circumcision*, that he order'd that the *Circumcision* of them shou'd not be deferr'd beyond the 8th day. God was pleas'd to be so gracious as to chuse the Children with their Parents, and look upon them as holy upon their account. This was ground enough for their Admission into the Church, and for God to look upon them as *Believers*, tho' they cou'd not make open profession of their Faith.

The Faith and consent of the Father or the God.

Godfather, and of the Congregation under which he was Circumcis'd, was believ'd of Old by the *Jews* to be imputed to the Child as his own Faith and consent. See *Seld. De Jure, lib. 2. c. 2. De Synedr. lib. 1. cap. 3.* And they had good ground in *Scripture* for this opinion, because the infidelity and disobedience of the Parents, in wilfully neglecting or despising the Circumcision, was imputed to the Children, who were esteem'd and punish'd as breakers of the Covenant, when they were not Circumcis'd, *Gen. 17. 14.* And therefore, if the act of Parents in neglecting to bring their Children to Circumcision was reputed theirs: much more their act in bringing them to it, might well be reputed as their act and deed. Thus *Numb. 3. 28.* we find the keeping of the sanctuary imputed to the Males of the *Cobathites*, of a month old and upwards; because their Fathers actually kept it, and they were to be train'd up to it. Thus *Deut. 29. 11, 12.* the *little ones* are expressly said to enter into the Covenant with God, because the Men of *Israel* did so. Thus also, tho' *Christ* heal'd grown Persons for their own Faith, *Matth. 9. 29.* yet he heal'd Children for the Faith of their Parents, or others who besought him for them; as it were imputing it to them for their own Faith; *Mark 9. 23. Matth. 8. 13. John 4. 50.* Vid. *Cassand. De Baptismo Infant. p. 729.* Taylor of Baptiz. Inf. Great Exemplar, Part 1. Sect. 9.

5. The Church was the same for substance under the Law, as it was before it; and still remains the same for substance under the Gospel, as it was under the Law. For *Abraham* is still the Father of the Faithful: and we that believe under the Gospel, are as much his Children, in the true meaning of the

the words, as those that were Believers under the Law. Hence St. *Peter*, Epist. 1. *ch.* 2. v. 9. calls Christians by those Titles, which God gave to the *Jews*, as to his peculiar People, viz. a *Chosen Generation*, *Royal Priesthood*, &c. and St. *Paul* compares the calling of them to the engrafting of the *Wild Olive-tree* into the *Old Olive-tree's* Stock, *Rom.* 11. 17, &c. *Christ* and his Apostles introduc'd as much of *Judaism* into the Christian Church, as the nature of the Reformation wou'd bear : and adher'd as much as they cou'd to the *Old*, both in the Matter and Form of the *New* Oeconomy. For the proof of this the Reader may consult *Grot.* Opus. *Tom.* 3. p. 510, 520. &c. *Hammond* of Baptizing Infants, *Selden de Jure*; l. 2. c. 2. de Synedr. l. 1. c. 3. *Lightfoot's* *Horæ Heb.* p. 42. *Hammond* on *Matth.* 2. 1. *Alting.* Dissert. Septima de Profelyt. *Mede's* 1 B. disc. 43. 2 B. *Christ. Sacrif.* *Cudworth* on the Lord's Supper, *Thorndike* of Religious Assemb. *Taylor's* Great Exemplar, Part. 1. Disc. of Baptism, Numb. 11. *Dodwell's* One Altar and One Priesthood, *Lightfoot* on 1 Cor. 5. 4.

Some things, I confess, they laid aside ; but their Reasons for so doing were, 1. Because very many of the *Jewish* Rites were fulfill'd in *Christ* ; and this is so plain, that I need not prove it. 2. Because many of them were inconsistent with the Nature of Christianity ; which was to be, 1. *Mainly*, in opposition to the Law, which was but a *School-Master* to bring them to *Christ*, *Gal.* 3. 24. and the *Jews* were under it, as Children are under Tutors, *Chap.* 4. 1, 2, 3, 4. for they had Childish understandings, and were like Children, to be instructed by Symbolical Lessons, viz. Washings, &c. 2. *Free*, in opposition to the servile Nature of the *Jewish* Church, which was loaded with numberless

less observances, of which the *Jews* were grown weary, and with which they had been for a long time heavy laden, when *Christ* call'd them to take his yoke upon them, which was to be so easy and light. 3. *Universal*, God injoin'd the *Jews* many things, in opposition to the neighbouring Idolatrous Nations; that there might be a mutual strangeness between them, and that by Ceremonial singularities they might be distinguish'd from the rest of the World: but then *Christ* coming to break down the middle Wall of Partition betwixt the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and to abolish the enmity of ordinances that was betwixt them, that he might make peace between them, and reconcile them both into one body; it was requisite to this end, that he shou'd abolish these, and all other distinguishing characters betwixt them, which wou'd have hindred the progress of the Gospel, because they were become so odious and ridiculous to the *Gentile* World. And this is the reason, why the bloody Rite of *Circumcision* is chang'd into the easy Rite of *Baptism*.

6. *Circumcision* was a Sacrament of equal Significance, Force and Perfection with *Baptism*; and *Baptism* succeeded in the room of it, not as an *Antitype* succeeds in the place of the *Type*, but as one positive institution succeeds in the place of another. For we must note, that strictly and properly speaking, there was the same difference betwixt the *Type* and the *Antitype*, as betwixt the Shadow and the Substance, or betwixt a Man and his picture in a Glass; insomuch that what was in the *Type*, did only represent something which did in a more perfect manner belong to the *Antitype*. Thus the blood of Sacrifices represented the blood of *Christ*, which do's truly purge the Conscience

Science from dead works ; and the healing virtue of the Brazen Serpent was a Symbol of the healing virtue of *Christ* upon the Cross. But the case is not so betwixt Circumcision and *Baptism* ; because Circumcision has no Symbolical likeness with *Baptism*, nor any thing belonging to it common to *Baptism*, which doth not as fully belong unto it, as unto *Baptism* it self.

For, 1. Circumcision was heretofore a real Sacrament of Initiation into the Covenant of Grace, a Seal of the Righteousness of Faith, and a confirmation of the Covenant betwixt God and Man, as much as *Baptism* is now. *Baptism* do's nothing under the Gospel, which Circumcision did not as properly and effectually do under the Law : and therefore it cou'd not be a *Type* of *Baptism*, any more than the Broad Seal of *England* three hundred Years ago was a *Type* of this. And accordingly 'tis never mention'd in the *New Testament* as a *Type* of *Baptism*, nor *Baptism* as the *Antitype* of it ; but succeeded in the room of it, not as the *Antitype* did in the place of the *Type*, but as one absolute Ordinance or positive Institution do's in the place of another. 2. Circumcision was not a *Type* of *Baptism*, because a *Type* is an Exemplar appointed under the *Old Testament* to prefigure something under the *New* : but *Baptism* was it self of *Jewish* Institution under the *Old Testament* ; and by consequence cou'd not be Typify'd and prefigur'd by Circumcision, because it was us'd together with it in the *Jewish Church*. The *Jewish Church* made it a Ceremony of Initiating Profelytes under the Law ; and our Savior liking the Institution, continu'd the use of it, and made it the only Ceremony of Initiating Profelytes under the Gospel ; superadding to it the compleat nature

nature of an Initiatory Sacrament, or the full force of Circumcision, as it was a sign of the Covenant, and a seal of the Righteousness of Faith.

Having premis'd these Six things, I proceed to the main business; in treating of which I design to shew, 1. That *Infants are capable of Baptism*. 2. That *they are not excluded from Baptism by Christ*. 3. That *'tis unlawful to separate from a Church, which appoints Infants to be baptized*. 4. That *'tis the duty of Christian Parents to bring their Children unto Baptism*. 5. That *'tis lawful to Communicate with Believers, who were Baptiz'd in their Infancy*.

I. Then I shall shew, that *Infants are capable of Baptism*. God commanded Infants to be Circumcis'd, as well as adult Persons; and surely, if they were capable of Circumcision, then they are also capable of *Baptism*. For the Two Covenants, of Circumcision and Baptism, are for substance the same, and the grace of those Covenants the very same; and therefore if the Initiation of Infants was then no absurdity, it can be none now. Nay, if Infants were admitted into the Church, when the entrance was more grievous and not without Blood; how unreasonable is it to assert, that they are now incapable of admission into it, when the entrance is made more easy, and more agreeable to the weakness of a tender Child?

'Tis said indeed, that *Infants are incapable of Baptism*, because they cannot answer the Ends of it; they cannot understand the Gospel, or Profess their Faith and Repentance, or Submit to *Baptism* out of their own choice, nor can they have their Faith and Hope further strengthen'd in the use of it. But this way of arguing is very weak and fallacious, and reflecting upon the Wisdom of God.

First,

*First*, It is weak and fallacious, because it makes no distinction betwixt a *strict Institution*, which is Instituted by God for one, or a few ends, and precisely for persons of one sort; and an *Institution of Latitude*, which is Instituted by him for several ends, and for different sorts of Persons, differently qualify'd for those several ends. Of the first sort was the *Jewish Ordinance of Fringes*, which cou'd only concern grown Persons, because they only were capable of answering the End, for which it was Instituted, *viz. To look upon them and remember the Commandments of the Lord*: and of the latter sort is the Holy Ordinance of *Marriage*, which was appointed for several ends, and for persons differently qualify'd for those several ends; insomuch that persons who are incapacitated as to some ends of Marriage, may yet honestly Marry, because they are capable of the rest. For this reason, those who are not capacitated for the Procreation of Children, may Marry, because they are capable of answering another end, for which Marriage was Ordain'd. Now our Adversaries cannot prove, that *Baptism* is a *strict Institution*, because it succeeded in the room of *Circumcision*, which was an *Institution of Latitude*; and because our Savior was Baptiz'd, who was less capable of *Baptism*, than Infants possibly can be. For *John* Baptiz'd with the *Baptism* of Repentance, and thereby Seal'd unto the People the Remission of their Sins. Now our Savior was without sin, and yet he was Baptiz'd; which shews, that a Man who is capable of some ends of *Baptism*, may be Baptiz'd, tho' he is not capable of the rest.

*Secondly*, 'Tis reflecting upon the Wisdom of God, because God commanded young Babes to be Circumcis'd, tho' all the ends of Circumcision cou'd  
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not be answer'd by them. For, since there lies the same objection against *Infant Circumcision* as against *Infant Baptism*, therefore those Men who argue thus against *Infant Baptism*, do reproach the Divine Wisdom, which injoin'd *Infant Circumcision*.

Children are capable of all the ends of Baptism, as it is a Sign to assure us of God's favor, and to consign to us the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace. They may be made Members of a Church, and adopted Heirs of Eternal Life; as well as they may be made Members of a Family, and adopted Heirs of a Temporal Estate. And if they are capable of the Benefits and Privileges of Christianity, why shou'd not the sign of those Benefits and Privileges be apply'd to them? Suppose a Prince shou'd send for an attainted Traytor's Child, and in the presence of several Persons Assembled for that purpose, shou'd say, *You know the blood of this Child is attainted by his Father's Treason; by Law he has forfeited all Right to his Ancestors Estate and Titles, and is quite undone, tho' he be not sensible of his wretched condition. My Bowels of compassion yern upon him, and here I restore him to his Blood and Inheritance, to which henceforward he shall have as much Right, as if the Family had never been attainted. I justify him freely, and declare my self reconcil'd to him; and that no spot or imputation may hereafter lye upon him, I here before you all wash him with pure Water, to signify that he is cleans'd from his original attainder and corruption of Blood, and that he is as fully restor'd to his Birth right, as if he had never been attainted. Suppose, I say, this were done for an attainted Infant; cou'd any Man say, the action was insignificant and invalid, because that Child knew nothing of it? Or that he was incapable of the sign, when he was capable of be-*  
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ing wash'd from the attainer, which was the chief thing signify'd thereby?

Besides, tho' *Abraham* believ'd, and solemnly profess'd his Faith, before he was Circumcis'd; yet *Isaac* was Circumcis'd, and enter'd into the Covenant with God, before he was able to understand what the condition of the Covenant was. And will any Man say he was Circumcis'd in vain; or that God commanded a foolish thing; tho' he was under the very same incapacity as to the ends of Circumcision, that Infants now are as to the ends of Baptism.

If it be said, that Circumcision was more proper for Infants than Baptism, because it left a Mark in the Flesh, to instruct them what was done in their infancy, which *Baptism* do's not; I answer, 1. That even the Mark of Circumcision was as insignificant during the non-age of the Child, as *Baptism* is to Christian Infants: neither afterwards cou'd he tell what the meaning of that Character was, but by the Instruction of others. And therefore according to their way of reasoning against *Infant Baptism*, it ought to have been deferr'd till the full Years of discretion, when the Circumcis'd person might have understood the Spiritual signification thereof. 2. Allowing that Circumcision was more proper for Infants than *Baptism*, yet we must consider that the *Jews* knew very well, that *Baptism* left no Mark upon the person. And therefore those who argue against *Infant Baptism*, must condemn the *Jewish Church*, which for many Ages Baptiz'd Infants and minor Profelytes into the Covenant, as well as actual Believers, and yet were never reprov'd for it by any Prophet; which we may presume they wou'd have been, had baptismal Initiation of Infants into the Covenant

Covenant been so absurd, insignificant, and abusive a practise, as the Professors against *Infant Baptism* pretend it is.

II. I am to shew, that *Infants are not excluded from Baptism by Christ*. That he never excluded them by an express prohibition, the *Anabaptists* themselves do grant, because there is no such prohibition to be found in the New Testament: but then they pretend, that it was *Christ's* intention, that none but grown persons shou'd be Baptiz'd, because the Gospel requires, that persons to be Baptiz'd shou'd, 1. be *Taught*, *Matth.* 28. 19. 2. *Believe*, *Mark* 16. 16. 3. *Repent*, *Acts* 2. 38. But those and the like Texts do no more prove, that none but grown persons ought to be Baptiz'd, than the Apostles words, *2 Thess.* 3. 10. do prove, that none but grown persons ought to eat. For he requires, that if any wou'd not work, neither shou'd he eat; now none but grown persons can work, and therefore by this way of arguing none but grown persons ought to eat. Again, suppose there were a Plague in any Country, and God shou'd miraculously call eleven or twelve Men, and give them a Medicine against this Plague, and say; *Go into such a Country, and call the People of it together, and Teach them the Virtues of this medicine, and assure them, that he that believeth and taketh it from you, shall live, but he that believeth not, shall die.* Now since Children are capable of the Medicine, tho' they are ignorant of the Benefits of it; wou'd any Man conclude, that it was God's intention, that none but grown persons shou'd receive it, because they only cou'd be call'd together, and be taught the Virtues of it, and believe or disbelieve them that brought it? No certainly. Wherefore, seeing Children, as I have prov'd, are capable of the Benefits

of *Baptism*; and the *Apostles*, who were sent to Baptize all Nations, knew them to be capable of it, and to have receiv'd both *Circumcision* and *Baptism* in the *Jewish Church*: how shou'd it be thought, but that it was *Christ's* intention, that Children as well as grown Persons shou'd be Baptiz'd?

Shou'd God, in the daies of *David*, have order'd some Prophets to go and Preach the Law to every Creature, saying, *He that believeth, and is Circumcis'd and Baptiz'd, shall be sav'd, but he that believeth not shall be damn'd*; wou'd those Prophets have Circumcis'd and Baptiz'd only grown persons, contrary to the practise of the *Jewish Church*? Or if in a short History of their Mission we shou'd have read, that they Circumcis'd and Baptiz'd as many Profelytes, as gladly receiv'd their word; wou'd this have prov'd, that they did not also Circumcise and Baptize the Infants of those believing Profelytes, according to the Laws and Usages of their Mother Church? Or shou'd God bid twelve Men of a Church that had always practis'd *Infant Baptism*, go and Preach the Gospel in the *Indies*, saying, *He that believeth and is Baptiz'd, shall be sav'd*; wou'd those Men, that were bred up to the practise of *Infant Baptism*, think it was God's intention, that *Baptism* shou'd be deny'd to Infants? No certainly; and therefore by parity of Reason, the *Apostles* cou'd not so understand their Commission, as to exclude Infants from *Baptism*.

Now since our Savior has not, either expressly or otherwise, excluded Infants from Baptism, certainly his command to Baptize all Nations do's comprehend Infants as well as Men. For the *Apostles* liv'd under a dispensation, where Infants were initiated both by *Circumcision* and *Baptism* into the Church;

Church; and unless they had been instructed to the contrary, they must naturally understand their Commission of Baptizing to have extended unto Infants, as well as actual Believers.

Our Adversaries indeed put the greatest stress upon these words of our Savior, *Mark 16. 16. He that believeth and is Baptiz'd, shall be sav'd*: but if they wou'd well consider the next words, they wou'd find, that Infants are not at all concern'd in them; because it follows, *but he that believeth not, shall be damn'd*. The same want of Faith, which here excludes from *Baptism*, excludes also from Salvation: and therefore it cannot be understood of Infants, unless they will say, that the same incapacity of believing which excludes them from *Baptism*, excludes them from Salvation too. Wherefore 'tis plain, that the believing or not believing in that Text, is only to be understood of such as are in a capacity of hearing and believing the Gospel, that is, of grown persons; just as the words, *John 3. 36. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath Everlasting Life; and he that believeth not, shall not see Life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*.

But they urge also, that *Baptism* is unprofitable for Infants, because *putting away the filth of the Flesh*, which is all that Infants are capable of, signifies nothing; but only the answer of a good Conscience towards God, 1 Pet. 3. 21. of which, say they, Infants are wholly capable. To this I answer, that another Apostle tells us, *Rom. 2. 25, 29. that external Circumcision*, which is all that Infants are capable of, *profiteth nothing without keeping the Law*, which Infants cou'd not keep: but that the inward *Circumcision of the Heart and in the Spirit, was the true Circumcision*, and yet Infants are incapable of it. So that their way

of arguing proves nothing, because it stretches the words of the Apostles beyond their just meaning, which was to let both *Jews* and *Christians* know (not that their Infants were unprofitably Circumcis'd or Baptiz'd, but) that there was no resting in external *Circumcision* or Baptism.

But farther, had not the Church been alwaies in possession of this practise, or cou'd any time be shew'd on this side the Apostles, when it began; nay, cou'd it be prov'd that any one Church in the World did not *Baptize Infants*, or that any considerable number of Men (otherwise Orthodox) did decline the Baptizing of them upon the same principles that these Men do now: then I shou'd suspect, that their Arguments are better than they really are, and that *Infant Baptism* might possibly be a deviation from the Rule of *Christ*. But since it is so Universal and Ancient a practise, that there never was any Church, Ancient or Modern, which did not practise it; it can be nothing less than an Apostolical practise and tradition.

If it be said, that *False Apostles* and *False Teachers* brought in *Infant Baptism* in the very first Ages; I wou'd fain know, how it came to pass that the very Companions and Contemporaries of the Apostles, and the Ancient Saints and Martyrs, who wrote against other Heresies, pass'd it over in silence, tho' we are sure from *Irenæus* and *Tertullian*, that it was (a) practis'd in those early times. 'Tis impossible, that they shou'd all consent in such a dangerous Error, or that they shou'd all peaceably and tamely submit to it without opposition,

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(a) See *Suicerm* in the words ἀναγέννησις and παλιγγενεσία. *Hammond* on *Matth.* 19. 28. *John* 3. 5. *Selden* De Jure, lib. 2. c. 4. *Vossius* De Baptismo, p. 181.

or that such an alteration shou'd be made without observation, no body can tell how or when. Certainly those places of the *New Testament*, which require a profession of Faith and Repentance in grown Persons before Baptism, were understood by the ancient Fathers : and yet they never concluded from thence, that Infants ought not to be Baptiz'd. But if the *Scriptures* were doubtful in the case, I appeal to any Man, whether the harmonious practise of the ancient Churches, and the undivided consent of the Apostolical Fathers, be not the best interpreters of them. Let any modest Person judge, whether it be more likely, that so many famous Saints and Martyrs, so near the Apostles times, shou'd conspire in the practise of Mock Baptism, and of making so many Millions of Mock Christians; or that a little Sect shou'd be in a grievous Error. The brevity which I design, will not permit me to recite the Authorities of the ancients, and therefore I refer the Reader to *Cassander*, and *Vossius* De Baptism. Disp. 14. only I desire him to consider the following particulars.

1. That 'tis hard to imagin, that God shou'd suffer his Church to fall into such a dangerous practise, as our Adversaries think *Infant Baptism* to be, which wou'd in time Unchurch it; and that, even while Miracles were yet extant in the Church, and he bare them witnesses with signs and wonders and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost. And yet 'tis plain, that *Irenaus*, *Tertullian*, *Origen* and *Cyprian*, who are witnesses of *Infant Baptism* in those daies, do assure (b) us, that Mi-

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(b) See *Irenaus* Adv. Hær. l. 2, c. 56, 57. *Tertull.* Apol. and ad Scapul. *Origen.* adv. Celsam, Camb. p. 34, 62, 80, 124, 127, 334, 376. *Cyprian* ad Donat. and ad Magn. and ad Decetrian, p. 202. Edit. Rigalt.

rites were then not Extraordinary in the Church.

2. If *Infant Baptism* was not an Apostolical Tradition, how came the (c) *Pelagians* not to reject it for an innovation, when the Orthodox us'd it as an argument against them, that Infants were guilty of original Sin? But they were so far from doing this, that they practis'd it themselves, and own'd it as necessary for Childrens obtaining the Kingdom of Heaven, tho' they deny'd that they were Baptiz'd for the remission of original Sin.

3. If *Infant Baptism* be not an Apostolical Tradition, how came all Churches (d) whatsoever, tho' they held no correspondence, but were original plantations of the Apostles, to practise it? One may easily imagin, that God might suffer all Churches to fall into the harmless practise of *Infant Communion*; or that the Fathers of the Church might comply with the Religious fondness of the People in bringing their Children to the Lord's Supper, as we do with bringing them to Prayers: but that God shou'd let them all (not preserving one for a Monument of Apostolical Purity) fall into a practise, which destroys the being of the Church, is a thousand times more incredible; than that the Apostles, without a prohibition from Christ to the contrary, shou'd Baptize Infants according to the practise of the Jewish Church.

4. Wou'd not the Jewish Christians, who were offended at the neglect of Circumcision, have been

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(c) See Voss. Hist Pelag. lib. 2. p. 2. Id. de Baptis. Disp. 13. Thes. 18. and Disp. 14. Thes. 4. Cassand. Præf. ad Duc. Jul. p. 670. and Testim. vet. de Bapt. parv. p. 687. (d) See Breewood's Enquir. c. 20, 23. Cassand. Expos. de Auctor. Consult. Bapt. Inf. p. 692. Osor. l. 3. de Rebus gest. Eman. cit. a Voss. Disp. 14. de Bapt.

much more offended, if the Apostles had excluded their Children from Baptism, as the Children of Unbelievers, and refus'd to Initiate them under the *New Testament*, as they had alwaies been under the *Old* ? Wherefore, since among their many complaints upon the alteration of the *Jewish* Customs, we never read that they complain'd of their Childrens being excluded from Baptism : we may better argue, that the Apostles Baptiz'd their Children ; than we may conclude from the want of an expresse example of *Infant Baptism*, that they did not Baptize them.

III. I am to prove, that 'tis unlawful to separate from a Church, which appoints *Infant Baptism*. Now it appears from what I have already said, that *Infant Baptism* is a lawful thing, and therefore 'tis a sin to separate from that Church which commands it ; because the Church has authority to Ordain that, which may be done without sin.

But farther, *Infant Baptism* is not only lawful, but highly requisite also. For purgation by Water and the Spirit seem equally necessary, because, *Except a Man be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, John 3. 5. And 'tis reasonable to think, that Children are capable of entring into Covenant, because they are declar'd capable of the *Kingdom of God*, Mark 10, 14. Nay, we may justly conclude, that Children were Baptiz'd upon the Conversion of their Parents, after the Custom of the *Jewish* Church, because the Apostles Baptiz'd whole households, *Acts* 16. 15, 33. *1 Cor.* 1. 16. For 'tis probable, that the federal holiness of Believers Children makes them Candidates for Baptism, and gives them a right to it ; because the



Children of Believers are call'd *Holy*, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. To which I may add other Texts, *Psal.* 5. 5. *Rom.* 3. 23, 24. *John* 3. 5, 6. which have been alledg'd by the ancients, both before and after the *Pelagian* Controversy, to prove the *Baptism* of *Infants* necessary to wash away their original Sin, which makes them obnoxious to eternal Death. See *Voss. Hist. Pelag. p. 1. Thes. 6. p. 2. l. 2.* I say, it may be fairly concluded from these Texts, that *Infant Baptism* is requisite: but then these Texts in conjunction with the practise of the ancient Church do demonstrate that 'tis requisite; because the Church in the next Age to the Apostles practis'd *Infant Baptism*, as an Apostolical Tradition, and by consequence, as an institution of Christ.

I do not say, that Baptism is indispensably necessary to the Salvation of Infants, so that a Child dying unbaptiz'd thro' the carelessness or superstition of the Parents, or thro' their mistaken belief of the unlawfulness of *Infant Baptism*, is infallibly damn'd: but I affirm, that *Infant Baptism* is in any wise to be retain'd in the Church, as being most agreeable to the *Scripture*, and the Apostolical practise, and the institution of Christ. And if *Infant Baptism* be not only lawful, but so highly requisite, as it appears to be; then certainly 'tis unlawful to separate from that Church which enjoins it.

IV: In the next place I shall shew, that 'tis the duty of *Christian Parents* to bring their Children to *Baptism*; and in doing this I must proceed, as I did in the foregoing particular. Since Infants are not incapable of Baptism, nor excluded from it by Christ; nay, since there are good reasons to presume, that Christ at least allow'd them Baptism as well as grown Persons: therefore the command of the Church makes it the People's duty to bring their

their Children to Baptism, because 'tis lawful so to do.

But farther, *Infant Baptism* is highly expedient also. For, 1. it is very beneficial to the Infants, who are thereby solemnly consecrated to God, and made Members of Christ's Mystical Body the Church. Besides, they being by Nature Children of Wrath, are by Baptism made the Children of Grace, and receive a right to eternal Life, I cannot deny, but they may be sav'd without Baptism by the uncovenanted Mercy of God: but then the hopes of God's mercy in extraordinary cases, ought not to make us less regardful of his sure, ordinary, and covenanted Mercies, and the appointed Means to which they are annex'd. Nay, Infants do by Baptism acquire a present right unto all the promises of the Gospel, and particularly to the promises of the Spirit's assistance, which they shall certainly receive, as soon and as fast, as their natural incapacity removes.

Now, since these are the benefits of Baptism, and since Infants are capable of them; let any impartial Man judge, whether it is more for their benefit, that they shou'd receive them by being Baptiz'd in their infancy, or stay for them till they come to years of discretion. Is it better for a Child that has the *Evil*, to be touch'd for it while he is a Child, or to wait till he is of sufficient Age to be sensible of the benefit? Or is it best for a Traytor's Child to be presently restor'd to his Blood and Estate, and his Prince's Favor; or to be kept in a mere capacity of being restor'd, till he is a Man?

I must add, that Baptism laies such an early pre-engagement upon Children, as without the highest baseness and ingratitude they cannot afterwards

wards retract. For there is no person of common Ingenuity, Honour or Conscience, but will think himself bound to stand to the obligation which he contracted in his Infancy ; when he was so graciously admitted to so many blessings and privileges, before he cou'd understand his own good, or do any thing himself towards the obtaining of them. And therefore the Wisdom of the Church is highly to be applauded, for bringing them under such a beneficial pre engagement, and not leaving them to their own liberty at such years, when Flesh and Blood wou'd be apt to find out so many shifts and excuses, and make them regret to be Baptiz'd.

2. *Infant Baptism* is very Expedient, because it conduces much to the Well-being and Edification of the Church, in preventing those scandalous and shameful delays of Baptism, which grown Persons wou'd be apt to make in these, as they did in former times, to the great prejudice of Christianity.

Since therefore *Infant Baptism* is not only lawful and commanded by the Church, but most Expedient in it self, and most agreeable to the practice of the Apostles and Primitive Christians, and to the Will of *Christ* ; it must needs be concluded, that there lies the same obligation upon Parents to desire Baptism for their Children, as there do's upon grown Persons to desire it for themselves. For what Authority soever exacts any thing concerning Children or Persons under the years of discretion, laies at least an implicit obligation upon Parents to see that it be perform'd. For, if in the time of a general contagion, the Supreme Power shou'd Command, that all Men, Women and Children, shou'd every Morning take such an Antidote ; that Command wou'd oblige Parents to give it to their

their Children, as well as to take it themselves. Just so the Ordinance of Baptism being intended for Children as well as grown persons, it must needs oblige the Parents to bring them to it.

What I have here said about the obligation, which lies upon Parents to bring their Children to *Baptism*, concerns all *Guardians*, &c. to whose care Children are committed. And if any ask, at *what time they are bound to bring them to Baptism?* I answer, at *any time*; for the Gospel indulges a discretionary latitude, but forbids the wilful neglect, and all unreasonable and needless delays thereof.

V. As to *Communion with Believers, who were Baptiz'd in their Infancy*, 'tis certainly lawful, and has ever been thought so; nay 'tis an exceeding great sin to refuse Communion with them, because that wou'd be a disowning those to be Members of *Christ's Body*, whom he owns to be such.

Nothing now remains, but that I take off two objections. *First*, 'Tis said that *Infant Communion* may be practis'd, as well as *Infant Baptism*. But I answer, 1. There is not equal Evidence for the Practise of *Infant Communion*; because *St. Cyprian* is the first Author which they can produce for it, and then the Author of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and *Cyril of Jerusalem*, mention it towards the latter end of the *Fourth Century*, and *St. Austin* in the *Fifth*: whereas for *Infant Baptism* we have the Authority of *St. Cyprian* and a whole Council of Fathers, over which he presided; of *Origen*, *Tertullian*, *Irenaeus*, *St. Jerom*, *St. Ambrose*, *St. Chrysostom*, *St. Athanasius*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, and the *Third Council of Carthage*; who all speak of it as a thing generally practis'd, and most of them, as of a thing which ought to be practis'd in the Church.

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I may add, that none of the *Four Testimonies for Infant Communion* speak of it, as of an Apostolical Tradition, as *Origen* do's of *Infant Baptism*. 2. There is not equal Reason for the practise of it. For persons of all Ages are capable of Baptism: but the *Holy Eucharist* is the *Sacrament of Perfection*, instituted for the remembrance of *Christs* Death and Passion; which being an act of great Knowledge and Piety, Children are not capable to perform. Nor is there an equal concurrence of Tradition, or the Authority of so many Texts of Scripture for *Infant Communion*; it being grounded only upon *John* 6. 53. *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no life in you.* Now 'tis doubtful whether this be meant of the *Eucharist* or no, because it was not as yet instituted: but if it be so to be understood, yet the sense of it ought to be regulated by the chief end of its institution, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Nay, the Western Church, discerning the Mistake upon which *Infant Communion* was grounded, have long since laid it aside, tho' they still continue the practise of *Infant Baptism*.

But in truth, the practise of *Infant Communion* is so far from prejudicing the Cause of *Infant Baptism*, that it mightily confirms it; because none were, or cou'd be admitted to partake of the Holy Communion, till they were *validly* Baptiz'd. And therefore the practise of *Infant Communion* fully proves. that all the Churches, wherein it ever was, or still (e) is practis'd, were of opinion, that the *Baptism* of Infants is as *Valid* and *Lawful*, as that of grown Persons.

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(e) As in the Greek, Russian, and Abyssin Churches, and among the Christians of St. Thomas in the Indies.

Secondly,

Secondly, 'tis objected, that Children who have not the use of Reason, cannot know what a Covenant means, and therefore they cannot contract and stipulate; tho' St. Peter says, *the Baptism which saveth us must have the Answer, or Restipulation of a good Conscience towards God*, 1 Pet. 3. 21. To this I answer, 1. That this Objection is as strong against *Infant Circumcision*, as against *Infant Baptism*. 2. That God was pleas'd to Seal the Covenant of Grace unto Circumcis'd Infants upon an *implicit* and *imputative* sort of stipulation, which at years of understanding they were bound to own; because if they renounc'd it, the Covenant was as void, as if it had never been made. And therefore an *implicit* stipulation is sufficient for the *Baptism* of Infants; and St. Peter, 'tis likely, had not respect to all *Baptism*, or *Baptism* in general, but only to the *Baptism* of adult Profelytes, whom the Minister us'd to *interrogate* at the time of *Baptism*, much after the same manner as we *interrogate* adult Profelytes now. But it is plain that *Tertullian* (f) makes mention of *Sponsors* or *Sureties* for Children at *Baptism*; and 'tis very probable, that the Apostles made *Parents*, &c. *stipulate* in the name of their (g) Minors, when they Baptiz'd them, as the *Jews* were wont to do; and 'tis certain, that our Savior speaks of Children, that *Believe in him*, Matth. 18. 6. And therefore St. Peter might also probably allude to all *Baptism*, because Children might be answer'd for by other persons.

Thus, I hope, I have sufficiently justify'd the practise of *Infant Baptism*, and shewn, that it is by no means a sufficient excuse for separation from us.

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(f). De Baptism. cap. 18. (g) See Selden de Synedr. lib. 1. cap. 3.

## C H A P. VI.

*Objections against our Form of Baptism, and particularly that of the sign of the Cross, Answer'd.*

**I** Proceed now to consider the Objections against our Form of Baptism.

I. It is said, that *all Baptiz'd Infants are suppos'd to be regenerated, of which, some think, we cannot be certain.* But since they are *Baptiz'd into Christ's Body*, 1 Cor. 12. 13. and *into Christ*, and *have put on Christ*, Gal. 3. 27. and consequently are *new Creatures*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. since, I say, they are *Baptiz'd for the Remission of sins*, Acts 2. 38. and since *Baptism is call'd the Washing of regeneration*, Tit. 3. 5. therefore the *Scripture*, as well as our Church, supposes them to be regenerated; unless the Ordinances and Promises of God are of none effect towards them.

II. 'Tis objected, that *Godfathers and Godmothers have no Authority to covenant or act in their names.* To which I answer, 1. That the Sureties are procur'd by the *Parents*; and therefore, since 'tis granted that the *Parents* may act in behalf of the *Infant*, the Sureties have all that Authority which the *Parents* can give them. 2. The Church do's hereby take great security, that the *Infant* shall be religiously brought up: inasmuch as, besides their *Parents*, an obligation is laid upon others also to take care of it. If the *Parents* shou'd die or be negligent, the Sureties are engag'd to admonish the *Child*, and have greater authority and better advantages of doing so, than other Persons. And in  
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this Age, when the Duty of Christian reproof is so generally omitted, 'twere well if the defect were this way a little supply'd : but 'tis by no means fit, that the opportunity thereof, and obligation thereto, shou'd be taken away. If it be said, this is seldom practis'd: I answer, that the goodness of a Rule is to be judg'd of by the good that is done where 'tis kept, and not where 'tis broken. And if the *Dissenters* have nothing to say, but that 'tis neglected ; they may remove this objection themselves, by returning to the Church, and increasing the number of those that observe it. Thus they shall have the benefit of the order of the Church, and the Church the benefit of their Examples.

As for the *Interrogatories* put to the Sureties, and their *Answers*, they are a Solemn Declaration of what *Baptism* obliges us to; and that Infants do stand engaged to perform it, when they come to Age. This is the known meaning of the Contract; and therefore I see not, why it shou'd be said to be liable to *misunderstanding*.

III. But that which is most dislike'd is the *Cross* in *Baptism*, against which 'tis objected, 1. That the sign of the *Cross* has been notoriously abus'd by the *Papists*, and that our retaining of it makes us partakers of their Superstitions and Idolatry. 2. That it seems a new Sacrament, and therefore is an invasion of *Christ's* right, who alone may institute Sacraments.

As to the *First* pretence, tho' I readily acknowledge that the *Cross* has been notoriously abus'd by the *Papists*, yet this do's not prove our retaining of it to be unlawful, if we consider *Three* things.

1. That the use of this sign was common in the Primitive Times, and is more Ancient than any of those



those Corruptions, for which we differ from the *Papists*. *Tertullian* (a) speaks of it, as of a practice which *Tradition* had introduc'd, *Custom* had confirm'd, and the *Believers faith* had observ'd and maintain'd: which words, together with his frequent and familiar mention of it, make it very improbable, that he receiv'd it from the *Montanists*. Forty years after him, and about two hundred after *Christ*, *Origen* (b) mentions those, who at their Baptism were signed with this sign: and about one hundred Years after, *St. Basil* (c) gives this usage the Venerable Title of an *Ecclesiastical Constitution*, or first Law of the Church, that had prevail'd from the *Apostles daies*, that those who believe in the Name of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, should be sign'd with the sign of the Cross.

But of all the Fathers, *St. Cyprian*, who was before *St. Basil*, and very near (if not contemporary with) *Tertullian* himself, not only speaks very familiarly of the use of this sign, but has some expressions that would now seem very harsh and unwarrantable: and yet the authority of this Father has sav'd him from being question'd about it. He (d) tells us, that they are sign'd in the forehead with the Cross, who are thought worthy of the Lord; that Baptism is sanctify'd by the Cross; and that it compleats every Sacrament. The great antiquity of this usage is manifest; nay, the Fathers frequently use being sign'd in the forehead for being Baptiz'd.

I shall not instance in *St. Cyril*, *St. Ambrose* and *St. Austin*, who sprinkle their writings with the common mention of this Ceremony, and often-

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(a) De Coron. Mil. (b) Hom. 2. in Psal. 38. (c) De Spir. S. c. 27. (d) See *Cyprian*. De Lapf. p. 169. adv. *Demet.* p. 203. De Unit. p. 175.

times frame arguments for a good Life from this very sign upon their Foreheads. Only I shall add this remark; that the first Christian Emperor *Constantine the Great*, had his directions probably from Heaven it self, to make this sign the great Banner in his Wars, with this encouragement, that *by this he shou'd overcome*. That this *Dream* or *Vision* was from Heaven, and a thing of great reality, is evident from the success of that Prince's Army under it: and we cannot suppose, that our Blessed Lord wou'd by so immediate a Revelation countenance such a Rite as this, already us'd in the Church, if he had resented it before as superstitious or any way unwarrantable. I may add, that we ought not to be too petulant against that, which the *Holy Spirit* has sometimes signaliz'd by very renown'd Miracles; as those that consult the Ecclesiastical Histories of the best Authority, cannot but be convinc'd: and that those conceits of the Fathers concerning this sign, which may perhaps be too fanciful, do confirm the ancient reception of it into the Primitive Church.

If it be said, that the ancient Christians us'd this sign, because they liv'd amongst *Jews* and *Heathens*, to testify to both, that they made the *Cross* the Badge of their profession, and wou'd not be asham'd of it, tho' 'twas a *stumbling-block* to the one, and *foolishness* to the other: whereas we have no such occasion for it, who do universally profess Christianity; I answer, 1. That this Objection supposes the sign to be lawful, and that it may be us'd upon weighty Reasons; and surely then the command of Authority may justify the practise of it. 2. That we have as just reason to use it as the Primitive Christians, because of the blasphemous Contempt that is generally cast upon  
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the whole Scheme of Christianity, particularly the Merits of our Savior's Cross and Passion, by the pretended Wits of our Age. So that St. Cyprian's (e) words are now pertinent, *Arm your Foreheads, that the Seal of God may be kept safe*; as if he shou'd have said, *Remember the Badge you took upon you in Baptism, and so long as you have that upon your Foreheads, never be asham'd or laugh'd out of countenance as to the memory of our Savior's love, and the foundation of your hopes laid in his Death and Passion.*

I grant indeed, that the use of the Cross is an indifferent Ceremony, and that Baptism is, as our Church declares, compleat without it: but what I contend for, is fully prov'd, viz. that the Cross was us'd in the first Ages of Christianity; from whence it follows, that tho' 'tis not necessary, yet 'tis warrantable.

2. Our use of this sign is not in the least like the Popish use of it. For, 1. we admit of no visible Crucifixes; nor has any of our Writers ventur'd to say (f) with Mr. Baxter, that a Crucifix well beftteth the imagination and mind of a Believer; and that it is not unlawful to make an image (of a Crucifix) to be an Object or Medium of our consideration, exciting our minds to worship God. The sense of our Church is truly express'd by Mr. Hooker, who (g) saies, *That between the Cross which Superstition honoreth as Christ, and that Ceremony of the Cross which serveth only for a sign of remembrance, there is as plain and great a difference, as between those Brazen Images which Solomon made to bear up the Cistern of the Temple, and that which*

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(e) Epist. 56. ad Thiber. (f) Christian Direct. Eccles. Cas. Qu. 113. p. 875, 876. (g) Eccles. Pol. l. 5. p. 348.

the Israelites in the Wilderness did adore. Ours is a mere transient sign, which abides not so long as to be capable of becoming an *Object* or *Medium of worship*, any more than any words we use in worship may do. 2. Our use even of this transient sign is nothing like the *Papish* use of it. For the *Papists* use it upon all occasions; and at Baptism they use it much oftner, and so differently from our way, that 'tis not us'd at the same time and with the same words that we use it with. This is evident from the *Roman Ritual*.

3. Tho' the Church of Rome has notoriously abus'd this sign, yet 'tis not unlawful for us to continue the use of it, as I shall fully prove in the *Eighth Chapter*.

As to the *Second* pretense, that the sign of the Cross is a new Sacrament, I answer, that we all agree, that a *Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and Spiritual Grace given unto us, Ordain'd by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and as a Pledge to assure us thereof*. And therefore, since we never suppos'd, that the use of the Cross in Baptism cou'd confer Grace, nor have ever made the least pretense to any Divine appointment for it; we ought not to be charg'd as introducing a *New Sacrament*.

If it be said, that we make the Cross a sign betokening our Faith and Christian Courage, because we apply it in token that hereafter he shall not be asham'd to confess the Faith of Christ Crucify'd, &c. and that therefore we make it an outward sign of an inward and Spiritual Grace; I answer, that we own it to be a significant Ceremony, as all our Ceremonies are; for we do not account a Ceremony *innocent*, because 'tis *insignificant*

*cant and impertinent* : but yet we deny it to be an outward and visible sign of an inward and Spiritual Grace. For our Ceremonies are not Seals and assurances from God of his Grace to us, but hints and remembrances of some Obligation we are under with respect to him ; and this kind of significant Usages has ever been taken up without any imputation of introducing a New Sacrament.

For, 1. The *Jewish* Church chang'd the posture of eating the Passover, from *Standing* to *Sitting*, in token of their Rest and Security in the Land of *Canaan*. There was also an *Altar of witness* rear'd on the other side of *Jordan* ; and the *Synagogue Worship*, *Rites of Marriage*, *Form of taking Oaths*, &c. were significant ; and yet they were all receiv'd in the purest times of the *Jewish* Church, and comply'd with by our Savior himself. 2. The *Christian* Church of the first Ages us'd the same liberty, as appears by the customs of the *Holy Kiss* and the *Feast of Charity*. *Tertullian*, *de Orat.* speaks as if the public Service were imperfect, if it concluded not with the *Holy Kiss* ; which was us'd in token of the mutual Communion and Fellowship, that Christians had with one another. The *Feast of Charity* also signify'd the mutual Love and Communion of Christians, and the equal regard that God and our Savior had towards all sorts and conditions of Men, when they were all to eat freely together at one common Meal. I might further instance in the Ceremony of *insufflation*, which was us'd as a sign of *Breathing into them the good Spirit* ; and the Baptiz'd Person's *stripping off his garment* in token that he put off the Old Man ; and the *trine immersion*, at the mention of each Person of the Trinity, to signify the Belief

Chief of that great Article. Now all these things were anciently practis'd without any jealousy of invading the prerogative of Christ in instituting New Sacraments. 3. All the Reformed Churches, nay, the very Dissenters themselves, do use some Symbolical actions in their most Religious Solemnities. For, 1. Their giving to the Baptiz'd Infant a *New Name* seems to betoken it's being made a *New Creature*. Nay, the Dissenters generally give it some Scripture Name, or one that betokens a particular grace; and this is an *outward and visible sign*, and this too sometimes of an *inward and spiritual grace*; and yet they do not think it a *New Sacrament*. 2. The Dissenters plead for sitting at the *Lord's Supper*, because 'tis a *Table gesture*, and expresses *Fellowship with Christ*, &c. This is an *outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*; and yet 'tis not accounted an additional *Sacrament* to that of the *Lord's Supper*. 4. and lastly, Suppose that an *Independent*, when he is admitted into their Church Covenant, shou'd signify his assent by *holding up his band*, or the like; this is an *outward and visible sign* of no less than a *new State of life*, that is, of being made a Member of *Christ's Church*, and being engaged to all the Duties, and intated in all the Privileges of it: and yet this was never charg'd upon them by the *Presbyterians*, as introducing a *New Sacrament*. Now from all these instances 'tis evident, how unreasonable a thing it is, that our using the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he (the Infant) shall not be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucify'd, &c. shou'd be thought an adding of a *New Sacrament* of the Cross to that of Baptism.

But 'tis objected, that our Convocation, c. 30. declares, That by the sign of the Cross the Infant

is *Dedicated*, &c. Now, say they, *Baptism* is it self a Seal of *Dedication* to God, and therefore our *Dedicating* the Infant by our own invented way of the sign of the *Cross*, is adding a New Sacrament. To this I answer, that *Dedication* may properly signify a Confirmation of our first *Dedication* to God, and a Declaration of what the Church thinks of a Baptiz'd Person; and the sign of the *Cross* is the *Medium* of this Declaration. That this is the meaning of our Church, is evident, if we compare the *Office of Baptism* and the *Canon* together. Both the *Rubric* and *Canon* say, that *Baptism* is compleat without the sign of the *Cross*. It is expressly said, *We receive this Child into the Congregation of Christ's Flock, and upon that do sign it with the Cross*; So that the Child is declar'd to be *within the Congregation of Christ's Flock*, before 'tis sign'd with the *Cross*. Since therefore the Person is *Dedicated* in *Baptism*, and the *Baptism* is acknowledg'd compleat without, or before the sign of the *Cross*; we cannot be thought to *Dedicate* in *Baptism* and to *Dedicate* by the *Cross* again: but the *Dedication* by the *Cross* must be something very distinct from the *Dedication* of *Baptism*; that is, the one is *the sign of the Dedication*, and the other *the Dedication it self*. So that this is plainly no other, than a Declaration the Church makes of what the Baptiz'd Person is admitted to, and what engagement he lies under. Which Declaration is therefore made in the name of the Church in the Plural number, *We receive this Child, &c. and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, &c.* whereas in *Baptism*, the Minister alone, as the immediate Agent of *Christ*, pronounces in the singular number, *I Baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,*

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From what has been said, I hope, it appears, that our Office of *Baptism* has nothing in it, that may in the least justify a separation from us.

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## CHAP. VII.

*Objections against our Communion Office, and particularly that of kneeling at the Sacrament, Answer'd.*

**T**H<sup>O</sup> the Communion Office, for the Gravity and Holiness thereof, is preferr'd by the *Dissenters* before all other Offices in the *Common Prayer Book*, yet it has not pass'd free from exception. For,

I. 'Tis objected against it, that the Petition in the Prayer before Consecration, *That our sinful Bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our Souls wash'd by his most precious Blood*, implies, that the Blood of Christ has greater efficacy than his Body, inasmuch as the Soul is said to be cleans'd by the Blood of Christ, and only the Body by Christ's Body. But I answer, that at the delivery of the Bread and Wine, the Priest saies, *The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy Body and Soul unto everlasting Life*; and *The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was, &c.* And therefore 'tis plain, that our Church teaches, that the Sanctification and Salvation of our Souls and Bodies flow from the Body as well as the Blood of Christ. Nor do's the mentioning of one alone exclude the other; for the Apostle speaks sometimes of the Bread alone, *1 Cor. 10. 17.* and sometimes of the Wine alone, *1 Cor. 12. 13.* and yet all Men must grant, that he meant both.



II. 'Tis said, that Christ did not deliver the Elements into every Person's hands, with a Form of words recited to every one of them, as we do. But I answer, 1. That this do's not appear from *Christ's* words; for the Evangelists may well be suppos'd to give a short account of the Institution, and then what might be particularly said or done to every one, wou'd be sufficiently related in being said to be done or spoken to all. 2. Suppose that our practice do's vary from this circumstance of the Institution, it may be as easily defended as celebrating the Lord's Supper at Dinner-time, and not at Supper, which the *Dissenters* themselves do not scruple. 3. Our Savior commanded his Disciples, *Matth. 28. 19.* to Teach all Nations, *Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* But will any Man think, that when great Numbers are to be Baptiz'd together, the Form of Baptizing *in the Name of the Father, &c.* may not lawfully be express'd severally to every Person? And why may not the same be done in the Lord's Supper? Wherefore the practise of our Church herein is no way unsuitable to the Institution of *Christ*, or the nature of the Sacrament; and the alteration of it wou'd be for the worse, and abate the Solemnity of its Administration. See *Falkner's Libert. Eccles. p. 218, &c.*

III. The last and great objection is against the posture of *kneeling at the Sacrament*; and therefore I shall consider it largely, and endeavor to shew,

1. That *Christ* has not forbidden us to kneel at the Sacrament.

2. That *kneeling* is not a deviation from his Example.

3. That 'tis not unsuitable for its being no Table gesture.

4. That

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4. That 'tis not contrary to the practise of the Church in the best and purest Ages.

5. That kneeling is not therefore unlawful, because 'twas introduced by Idolaters, and is still notoriously abus'd by the Papists to Idolatrous ends and purposes.

First then, *Christ* has not forbidden us to kneel at the Sacrament. For in all the *Scriptures* God has not given us any express command to determine our practise one way or other : and if Authority did not restrain our liberty, we might either sit, kneel or stand, without the least violation of the Law of God.

The Apostles and Disciples of our Lord at the Institution of the Sacrament, which the *Scripture* relates in several places (a) were the Representatives of the whole Church, and are to be consider'd under a double capacity ; either as Governors and Ministers, intrusted by *Christ* with the Power of dispensing and administering the Sacrament, or as ordinary and Lay Communicants. If we consider them as Governors and Stewards of the Mysteries ; their duty to which they are oblig'd by the express Command of their Lord, is to take the Bread into their hands, to Bless and Consecrate it to that Mysteries and Divine use to which he design'd it, to break and distribute it ; and so in the like manner to take and bless the Cup, and give it to their Fellow Christians. But if we consider them as private Men, and in common with all Believers ; their duty was to take and receive the Bread and Wine, and to eat and drink in Commemoration of *Christ's* Love. But what syllable

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(a) *Matth.* 26. 26, &c. *Mark* 14. 22, &c. *Luke* 22. 19, &c. *1 Cor.* 11. 23, &c.

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or shadow of a command is there in all the History for the use of any gesture in the act of receiving? Since then the *Holy Scripture* is altogether silent as to this matter, its silence is a full and clear demonstration, that *kneeling is not repugnant to any express command of our Lord*, because no gesture was ever commanded at all.

But the *Scotch Ministers* Assembled at *Pertb* affirm, that when our Lord commanded his Disciples to *do this*, he did by those Words command them to use that gesture, which he us'd at that time, as well as to take, eat, drink, &c. To this I answer, 1. That if our Lord did sit at the Institution (which we will suppose at present) yet there is no reason to think, that He intended by these words, *do this*, to oblige us to observe this Gesture only, and not several other circumstances, which he observ'd at the same time, as well as this. For example, if the words may be Interpreted thus, *Do this*, that is, sit as *Christ* did; why not thus also, *Do this*, that is, Celebrate the Sacrament in an Upper Room, in a Private House, late at Night, or in the Evening, after a full Supper, in the Company of *Twelve* at most, and they only Men, with their Heads cover'd according to the Custom of those Countries, and with unleavened Bread? There lies as great an obligation upon us to observe all those circumstances in imitation of our Lord, as there do's to sit. 2. Even the two last of those circumstances are generally allow'd, but all the rest are mention'd in *Scripture*, and were most certainly observ'd by *Christ*: whereas the gesture us'd by them is not mention'd, and what it was is very disputable, as I shall afterwards prove. How then can any Man think himself obliged in Conscience to do what *Christ* is not expressly said

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to do ; and not obliged to do what the *Scripture* expressly saies he did ? 3. 'Tis clear from *St. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* II. 23, &c. that *do this*, respects only the Bread and Wine, which signify the Body and Blood of *Christ*, and those other actions specify'd by him, which are essential to the right Celebration of that Holy Feast. For when 'tis said, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and *this do as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me*, and *as oft as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come* ; 'tis plain, that *do this*, must be restrain'd to the Sacramental actions there mention'd, and not extended to the gesture, of which the Apostle speaks not a word. Our Lord Instituted the Sacrament in Remembrance of his Death and Passion, and not in Remembrance of his gesture in Administring it : and consequently, *do this*, is a general Command, obliging us only to such particular actions and rites, as he had instituted, and made necessary to be us'd in order to this great end, viz. to signify and represent his Death, and that bloody Sacrifice which he offer'd upon the Cross for us miserable Sinners.

Nay, the Practise of our *Dissenters* proves, that no particular gesture is commanded. For there are many serious and sincere Persons among them, who profess that (were they left to their liberty) they cou'd use *kneeling* as well as any other gesture : but they think that an indifferent thing becomes unlawful, when 'tis injoin'd by Authority. I have already confuted this opinion : but 'tis certain, that by granting they cou'd use the posture of kneeling, were it not injoin'd, and consequently that 'tis in its own nature indifferent ; they do thereby grant, that there is no command for any particular posture.

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I must add, that the Reform'd Churches of *France*, and those of *Geneva* and *Helvetia* stand, the *Dutch* generally sit, but in some places (as in *West-Friesland*) they stand. The Churches of the *Bohemian* and *Augustin* Confession, which spread through the vast Countries of *Bohemia*, *Denmark*, and *Sweden*, thro' *Norway*, the *Duke-dom* of *Saxony*, *Lithuania* and *Ducal Prussia* in *Poland*, the *Marquisate* of *Brandenburg* in *Germany*, and several other places and free Cities in that Empire, do for the most part, if not all of them, use the Gesture of Kneeling. The *Bohemian* Churches were Reform'd by *John Husse*, and *Jerom* of *Prague*, who suffer'd Martyrdom at *Constance* about the Year 1416. long before *Luther's* time; and those of the *Ausborg* or *Augustin* Confession were founded and reform'd by *Luther*, and were the first Protestants properly so call'd. But these Churches so early reform'd and of so large extent, did not only use the kneeling Gesture at the Holy Sacrament; but they, as well as those of the *Helvetic* Confession, did in three (b) general Synods unanimously condemn the sitting Gesture (tho' they esteem'd it in it self lawful) as being scandalous for this remarkable Reason, viz. because it was us'd by the *Arians* (as their Synods call the *Socinians*) in contempt of our Savior's Divinity, who therefore placed themselves as Fellows with their Lord at his Table. And thereupon they desire and exhort all Christians of their Communion to change sitting into kneeling or standing, both which Ceremonies we indifferently leave free, ac-

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(b) 1. At *Cracow*, Anno Dom. 1573. 2. *Petricow* or *Peterkaw*, 1578. 3. *Wladislaw*, 1583.

ording as the custom of any Church has obtain'd, and we approve of their use without scandal and blame. Moreover they affirm, That these Socinians who deny Christ to be God, were the first that introduced Sitting at the Sacrament in their Churches, contrary to the practise of all the Evangelical Churches in Europe. Among all these Foreign Reform'd Churches I can find but one which uses Sitting, and forbids Kneeling, for fear of Bread worship; but yet in that Synod wherein they condemn'd Kneeling, they left it to the choice of their Churches to use Standing, Sitting, or an Ambulatory Gesture (as the French (c) do) and at last conclude thus; *These Articles are so settled by mutual consent, that if the good of the Churches require it, they may and ought to be chang'd, augmented and diminish'd.* What now shou'd be the Reason of this great Variety both in Judgment and Practise touching the Gesture to be us'd at the Lord's Supper? We cannot imagine, that an Assembly of Learned and Pious Divines, met together on purpose to consult how to reform their Churches according to the pure Word of God, shou'd thro' weakness and inadvertency overlook an express Command of Christ for the perpetual use of any particular Gesture, if any such there had been. Or shall we be so uncharitable as to think, that all these famous Churches wilfully past it by, and establish'd what was most agreeable to their own Humors, contrary to the known Will of God? Wou'd they have given liberty to all of their Communion to use several Gestures according to the Custom of their several Churches, if our Lord had tied them to observe

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(c) Harmon. 4. Synods of Holl.

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but one? Wou'd they declare (as the *Dutch Synod* doth) that their injunction might be alter'd, if the good of the Church so requir'd; if so be Sitting had been exprefly injoin'd by our Lord, to be perpetually us'd by all Christians? No, undoubtedly, they wou'd not; we cannot either in Reason or Charity fuppofe it.

The true Principle upon which all thefe Reform'd Churches built, and by which they are able to reconcile all this feeming difference in this matter, is the very fame with that which the Church of *England* goes by in her Synods; viz. (d) That as to Rites and Ceremonies of an indifferent Nature, every National Church has Authority to injoin, change and abolifh them, as they in Prudence and Charity fhall think moft convenient for the fetting forth God's Glory, the Edification of their People, and the Decent and Reverent Adminiftration of the Holy Sacrament. Whofoever therefore refufes to receive the Sacrament according to the Conftitution of the Church of *England*, purely becaufe Kneeling is contrary to the exprefs Command of Chrift, muft condemn the Judgment and praftife of all the Reform'd Churches beyond the Seas, who all agree in this, That the Gefuture in the Act of Receiving is to be esteem'd an Indifferent thing; and that whether we fit, or kneel, or ftand, or receive walking, we tranfgrefs

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(d) Vid. Art. 34. *Obfervat. of the French and Dutch Divines on the Harmony of Confessions.* Edit. Geneva 1681. Sect. 14. p. 120. *In hoc etiam ritu* (fpeaking of Kneeling at the Sacrament) *fuam cuique Ecclefia libertatem falvâ relinquentiam arbitramur.*

no law of God ; and consequently they prove my Assertion true, That Kneeling is no more contrary to any exprefs Command than any other Gesture : because they allow of all, as lawful in themselves, which cannot consist with an exprefs Command for the use of any other Gesture whatsoever.

Upon the whole matter, I think we may certainly conclude, that there is not a tittle of a Command in the whole *New Testament* to oblige us to receive the Lord's Supper in any particular posture : and if any be so scrupulous, as not to receive it in any other Gesture, but what is expressly commanded, they must never receive it as long as they live.

Secondly, I shall prove, that *Kneeling is not a deviation from Christ's example.* This will appear, if we consider, 1. that 'tis doubtful what Gesture our Savior us'd at the Institution of the Sacrament. For the *Scripture* do's not inform us what it was, and the *Jews* us'd variety of Gestures at the Passover ; and therefore, since our Lord's Example cannot certainly be known in this Matter, our Church cannot be charg'd with deviation from it. 2. Those who Kneel at the Sacrament in compliance with the Orders of the Church, do manifestly follow the Example of Christ. For our Savior comply'd with that Passover-gesture, which the *Jews* then us'd, tho' it was not the same that was us'd at the Institution in *Egypt* : and his compliance may teach us, not to be scrupulous about Gestures, but to conform to the innocent and prevailing Customs of the Church, wheresoever we live. And if Christians did walk according to this rule, they wou'd greatly promote the peace and welfare of the Church of Christ, and in so doing procure quiet and peace to themselves, with unspeakable comfort and satisfaction.

But



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But supposing our Lord did sit, as the *Dissenters* will have it ; yet his bare example do's not oblige all Christians to a like practice. 1. *Because* naked examples, without some rule or note added to them, to signify that 'tis God's Will to have them constantly follow'd, have not the force of Laws perpetually obliging the Conscience. And therefore, in this case, because no such note is to be found, we are not tied in Conscience to a strict imitation of Christ's Example. Thus the Example of our Savior do's not oblige us to defer our Baptism till the Age of thirty Years, or not to receive the Sacrament till a little before Death ; and, I pray, what reason is there to follow his Example in *sitting* at the Sacrament, any more than in those particulars ? 2. We are bound to imitate Christ in those things only which he has commanded : but *where there is no command, there is no necessity*. Indeed we must follow Christ and his Apostles ; but in what ? Why, in acting according to the *Gospel-Rule*. An example may help to interpret a Law, but of it self it is no Law. Against a rule no example is a competent warrant : and if the Example be according to the Rule, 'tis not the Example, but the Rule, that is the Measure of our actions. 3. The bare Example of Christ is no warrant for us to go by, because he was an Extraordinary Person, and did many things which we cannot, and many which we must not do. He Fasted forty Days and forty Nights, wrought Miracles, &c. which we are not to pretend to. They say indeed, *we are bound to imitate Christ and the commendable Example of his Apostles, in all things wherein it is not evident, they had special Reasons moving them thereunto, which do not concern us*. But I wou'd willingly

lingly know, how we shall be ever able to distinguish, when they acted upon special Reasons, and what they were; that we may know our Duty, if a bare Example without any Rule obliges us. And if we guide our selves by Scripture or Reason in this matter, then they are the Measures of the Example. Besides, if we are not to imitate them in such things, as they were mov'd to ~~do~~ upon special Reasons, which did not concern us, then we are obliged to imitate their Examples in such things as they did upon general and common Reasons, which concern us as well as them, or we are not obliged at all by any Example; and if so, then those Reasons are to be our Rule, to which we are to reduce their Examples. Unless we find some general or common Reasons, we have no War- rant (according to their own Principle) to follow their Examples; and when such Reasons do appear, then it's not the Example alone that obliges us, but Reason that approves the Example. To bring their own Rule to the case in hand, how do they know but that our Lord Sat at the Sacrament for special Reasons drawn from that Time and Place, or the Feast of the Passover, to which that Gesture was peculiar? How do they know, but that our Savior wou'd have us'd another Gesture, if the Sacrament had been Instituted apart from the Passover?

The necessity of the time made the Jews eat the Passover after one Fashion in Egypt, which afterward ceasing, gave an occasion to alter it in Canaan; and how do we know, but that our Lord comply'd with the present necessity, and that his Example (if he did Sit) was only temporary, and not design'd for a Standing Law, perpetually obliging to a like Practice? If Christ acted upon special

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Reasons, then we are not obliged, by their own Rule : and if he did not, let them produce the Reasons if they can, which make this Example of *Christ* of general and perpetual use, and to oblige all Christians to follow it. 4. 'Tis absurd to talk of *Christ's* Example apart from all Law and Rule, and to make that alone a principle of duty distinct from the Precepts of the Gospel, because *Christ* himself always govern'd his actions by a Law. For if we consider him as a Man, he was obliged by the *Natural Law*, as a *Jew*, by the *Mosaic Law*, as the *Messias*, by the *Gospel Law*. He came to fulfil all Righteousness, and to Teach and Practise the whole Will of God. If therefore we look only to his Example, without considering the various capacities and relations he bare, both towards God and towards us, and the several Laws by which he stood bound, which were the Measures of his Actions ; we shall miserably mistake our way, and act like Fools, when we do such things as he did pursuant to infinite Wisdom. Thus if we should subject our selves to the Law of *Moses*, as he did, we should thereby frustrate the great design of the Gospel : and yet even this we are obliged to do, if his Example alone be a sufficient warrant for our actions. Thus it appears that *Christ's* bare Example do's not oblige us to do any thing, that is not commanded.

I shall only add, that they who urge the Example of *Christ* against *Kneeling at the Sacrament*, do not follow it themselves. For our Savior probably us'd a Leaning Gesture ; and by what Authority do they change it to *Sitting* ? Certainly, our changing the Gesture is as warrantable as theirs. Nor is it enough to say, that *Sitting* comes nearer our Savior's Gesture than *Kneeling*, for if they keep

keep to their own Rule, they must not vary at all. The *Presbyterians* (if one may argue from their Practices to their Principles) lay very little stress on this Argument taken from the Example of *Christ*. For tho' they generally chuse to Sit; yet they do not condemn Standing as Sinful, or Unlawful in it self; and several are willing to receive it in that posture, in our Churches; which surely is every whit as wide from the Pattern our Lord is suppos'd to have set us (whether he lay along or sat upright) as that which is injoin'd and practis'd by the Church of *England*. There is too a confessed Variation allow'd of and practis'd by the generality of *Dissenters*, both *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, from the Institution and Practice of *Christ* and his Apostles, in the other Sacrament of Baptism. For they have chang'd dipping into sprinkling; and 'tis strange, that those who scruple kneeling at the Lord's Supper, can allow of this greater change in Baptism. Why shou'd not the Peace and Unity of the Church, and Charity to the Public, prevail with them to kneel at the Lords Supper; as much as mercy and tenderness to the Infants Body, to sprinkle or pour water on the Face, contrary to the first Institution?

Thirdly, kneeling is not therefore repugnant to the nature of the Lord's Supper, because 'tis no Table Gesture. The Sacrament is a Supper; and therefore, say they, the Gesture at the Lord's Table ought to be the same which we use and observe at our ordinary Tables, according to the custom and fashion of our Native Country: and by consequence, we ought to Sit, and not to Kneel, because sitting is the ordinary Table gesture, according to the mode and fashion of *England*.

Here, by the way, we may observe, that this

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Argument overthrows the two others drawn from the *Command* and *Example* of *Christ*. For, 1. Different Table gestures are us'd in different Countries; and therefore, tho' *Christ* did Sit, yet we are not obliged to Sit after his *Example*, unless sitting be in our Country the common Table gesture. 2. If the Nature of the Sacrament require a Table gesture, and that gesture in particular which is customary; then God has not *Commanded* any particular gesture, because different Countries have different Table gestures.

However, I shall fully Answer this Argument drawn from the Nature of the Sacrament, by shewing, 1. *What is the Nature of it.* 2. *That it do's not absolutely require a common Table gesture.* 3. *That Kneeling is very agreeable to the nature of the Lord's Supper, tho' 'tis no Table gesture.*

1. Then, the Nature of the Sacrament is easily understood, if we consider that the *Scripture* calls it the *Lord's Table* and the *Lord's Supper*. The *Greek Fathers* call it a *Feast* and a *Banquet*, because of that Provision and Entertainment which our Lord has made for all worthy Receivers. 'Tis stil'd a *Supper* and a *Feast*, either because 'twas Instituted by *Christ* at Supper time, or because it represents a Supper and a Feast; and so it is not of the same nature with a civil and ordinary Supper or Feast, tho' it bear the same name. Three Things are essential to a Feast; *Plenty*, *Good Company* and *Mirth*: but the *Plenty* of the *Lord's Supper* is a *Plenty* of Spiritual Dainties; and the *Company* consists of the Three Persons of the *Trinity*; and good Christians; and the *Mirth* is wholly Spiritual. So that the *Lord's Supper* differs in its nature from civil Banquets, as much as Heaven and Earth; Body and Spirit differ in theirs. Farther, the *Lord's Supper* is a Feast upon a Sacrifice for Sin, where-

wherein we are particularly to commemorate the Death of *Christ*. 'Twas also instituted in honor of our Lord, and to preserve an Eternal Memory of his wondrous Works, and to Bless and Praise our Great Benefactor. 'Tis also a Covenanting Rite between God and all worthy Communicants, and signifies that we are in a state of Peace and Friendship with him; that we own him to be our God, and swear Fidelity to him: we take the Sacrament upon it (as we ordinarily say) that we will not henceforth live unto our selves, but to him alone that died for us. 'Tis also a means to convey to us the Merits of *Christ's* Death, and a Pledge to assure us thereof. Lastly, 'twas instituted to be a Bond of Union between Christians, to engage and dispose us to love one another, as our Lord loved us, who thought not his Life too dear, nor his Blood too much to part with for our sakes. This therefore being the Nature of the Sacrament, it follows,

2. That it *do's not absolutely require a common Table gesture.* For if the Nature of the Sacrament, consider'd as a Feast, necessarily requires a Table gesture; then the Nature of the Sacrament, consider'd as a Feast, do's as well require all other Formalities that are essential, either to all civil Feasts whatsoever, or to all Feasts as they obtain among us: and consequently we must carve and drink one to another, &c. at the *Lord's Supper*, as we alwaies do at other Feasts. But this our *Dissenters* will by no means allow; nor do they think themselves obliged to observe all the other Formalities of a Feast, tho' they are as agreeable to the Nature of a Feast, as *Sitting* is.

It's not agreeable to the Nature of a Feast that one of the Guests, and the principal one too, shou'd fill out the Wine, and break the Bread, and distribute it to the rest of the Society; but this the

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*Dissenters* generally allow of, and practise at the Holy Communion. It's not agreeable to the nature of a Feast to sit from the Table, dispers'd up and down the Room. In all public Feasts there are several Tables provided, when one is not big enough to serve the Guests; and yet the *Dissenters* generally receive in their Pews, scatter'd up and down the Church, and think one Table is sufficient, tho' not capable of receiving the twentieth part of the Communicants in some large Parishes and numerous Assemblies. And where there are so few Communicants, that they may sit at the Table, they generally are against it (especially the *Presbyterians*) and think they are not obliged to observe that formality, tho' constantly practis'd at common and civil Entertainments. It's by no means agreeable to the nature of a Feast to be sorrowful. To mourn and grieve at a Feast is as indecent and unsuitable, as to laugh at a Funeral. But sure our *Dissenters* will not say, that to come to the Sacrament with a broken and contrite Spirit; to come with a hearty sorrow for all our Sins, which caus'd so much pain and torment to our dearest and best Friend, our ever blessed *Jesus*; to reflect upon the Agonies of his Soul in the Garden, the bitterness of his deadly Cup, the Torture he endur'd on the Cross, with a deep Sympathy and Trouble for the occasion; they will not surely, I say, affirm, that such a disposition of our Souls is improper and unsuitable to the Nature of this Feast, which we solemnize in Commemoration of his Death for our Sakes.

This Sacrament is also call'd the Lord's Supper; and consequently the nature of it requires the Evening, as the proper season for it: and yet our *Dissenters*

ters make no scruple of Communicating at Noon.

Again, the nature of the Lord's Supper do's not necessarily require a Table gesture, because 'tis not of the same nature with common and ordinary Feasts. For we cannot argue from Natural and Civil things to Spiritual; or conclude that, because they agree in their names, they are of the same nature. And therefore, tho' the Sacrament is a Feast; yet because 'tis a Spiritual Feast, and not of the same nature with common and ordinary Feasts, we must not think, that such a gesture as is necessary to the one, is also necessary to the other.

I must add, that the nature of the Lord's Supper, consider'd as a Feast, do's not necessarily require a common Table gesture in order to right and worthy receiving; because the *Dissenters* grant, that it may be worthily receiv'd *Standing*, tho' Standing is no common Table gesture.

If any shou'd yet urge, that no gesture besides Sitting is agreeable to the nature of the Sacrament, consider'd as a Feast; and that to use any other gesture won'd profane the Ordinance: I answer, that God calls the Passover a Feast, *Exod. 12. 14.* and yet he commanded the *Israelites* to celebrate it with their *Lins girt, their Shooes on their Feet, and their Staff in their Hands*; which were all signs of haste, but no Table gestures either among the *Jews* or the *Egyptians*. Now to say that God injoin'd Gestures unsuitable to that Ordinance, is to call his Wisdom in question: and to say, that the Feast of the Passover did in its nature admit of several Gestures, is to yield all that I desire: for then the Sacrament, consider'd as a Feast, will admit of several too, and consequently do's not oblige us to observe only a Feast gesture for the due celebration of it.



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3. *Kneeling* is very agreeable to the nature of the Lord's Supper, tho' 'tis no Table gesture. 1. Because 'tis a very fit Gesture to express Reverence, Humility and Gratitude by; which Holy affections are requisite to the Sacrament. 2. Since Christ ought to be Ador'd at the Lord's Supper for his wonderful kindness to us, therefore whatsoever is fit to express our Veneration, is not unsuitable to the Sacrament; and consequently bowing the Knees is proper, because 'tis an external sign of Reverence. 3. Since lifting up our Hands and Eyes, and imploying our Tongues in uttering God's Praises, are agreeable to the Lord's Supper; why shou'd *Kneeling* be thought unsuitable, which is only glorifying God with another part of our Body? 4. The Holy Sacrament was Instituted in remembrance of Christ's Death and Sufferings; and therefore I desire the *Dissenters* to consider his Gesture in the very extremity of his Passion, and to observe, that he then pray'd *Kneeling*, Luke 22. 41. And surely no sober Person will say, that 'tis improper to *Kneel* at the Sacrament, where we Commemorate those Sufferings, part of which he endur'd upon his bended *Knees*. 5. If we consider the benefits of the Sacrament, we cannot think *Kneeling* an unbecoming Gesture at it. If a grateful sense of God's infinite Mercy thro' the Merits and Sufferings of his Son, and of the manifold Benefits which our Lord has purchas'd with his most precious Blood; If a Mind deeply humbled under the sense of its own Guilt, and Unworthiness to receive any Mercy at all from the hands of our Creator and Sovereign Lord, whom we have by numberless and heinous Crimes so highly provok'd and incens'd against us: If such an inward temper and disposition

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sition of Soul becomes us at this Holy Feast, (which I think no Man will deny) then surely the most humble and reverential Gesture of the Body will become us too. Why shou'd not a submissive lowly deportment of Body suite with this solemnity, as well as an humble lowly Mind? And this is that which our Church (e) declares to be the end of her Injunction, in requiring all the Communicants to Kneel, *viz. for a signification of an humble and grateful acknowledgment of the Benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy Receivers.* The Commemoration of the Death and Passion of the Son of God will strike a Man, almost naturally, into the humblest posture of Adoration; But if any reverence be due at such a time, I am sure *Sitting* is a very unfit posture to express it. In a word, whatsoever Gesture best answers the Principal ends of this Holy Feast, do's best suite it's nature, and ought to be best esteem'd of, if we will be guided by the nature of the thing: and that *Kneeling* do's best answer the Nature and Ends of the Lord's Supper, I think, I have fully prov'd.

I shall crave leave to observe in the last place, that the primitive Church had no such Notion of the necessity of a Table gesture, as the *Dissenters* maintain. There is not the least mention made of the name *Table*, in any of their Writings, for the space of 200 years after *Christ*. For they call the place on which the Consecrated Elements stood, the *Altar*; and the Eucharist they call an *Oblation* and *Sacrifice*: and what connexion, I pray, is there between an *Altar* or a *Sacrifice*, and a *Table* gesture? The *Dissenters* indeed (f) say,

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(e) See the Declaration at the end of the Communion-Service in the B. of Com. Prayer. (f) *Dispute against Kneeling*, arg. 1. p. 6, 26, &c. that

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that *Kneeling or an Adoring-gesture is against the dignity of Guests, and debars us the Privileges and Prerogatives of the Lord's Table, such as social admittance and social entertainment; that it is against the purpose of Christ, whose intention was to dignify us by setting us at his Table; and much more of this nature: but it's plain that the Fathers thought otherwise, as the Phrases they use, and the Titles they give the Sacrament, plainly demonstrate. They call it, as St Paul doth, the Lord's Supper, the Kingly, Royal, and most Divine Supper, which import Deference, Distance, and Respect on our parts; the Dreadful Sacrifice, the Venerable and Unbloody Sacrifice, the Wonderful and Terrible Mysteries, the Royal, Spiritual, Holy, Formidable, Tremendous Table. The Bread and Wine after Consecration, are in their Language call'd the most Myste-  
 rious, most Holy Food and Nutriment, the most Holy Things; and the place where the Table stood, the most Holy part of the Temple, in allusion to that of the Jewish Temple, to which the Jews paid the highest Reverence. The Bread in particular they stil'd the Bread of God; the Cup, the Holy and Myste-  
 rious, the Royal and Dreadful Cup. They advise the Communicants to Reverence these Holy Mys-  
 teries, to come with Fear and Trembling, with Sorrow and Shame, with Silence and down-cast Eyes, to keep their Joy within, and to approach the Table with all the Signs and Expressions of Reverence and Humility imaginable. How can these Speeches consist with that Social, Familiar carriage at the Sacrament, which the Patrons of the Table gesture contend for, as the Privilege of Guests, and the Prerogative of the Lord's Table?*

*Fourthly,*

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Fourthly, I am to shew, that *Kneeling at the Lord's Supper* is not contrary to the general *Practice of the Church in the first Ages*. This I shall do by proving, 1. That it's highly probable, that the *Primitive Church* us'd to *Kneel in the Act of receiving the Holy Sacrament*, as our custom at present is. 2. That it's most certain they us'd an *Adoring Posture*.

First then, it's highly probable, that the *Primitive Church* us'd to *Kneel in the act of receiving the Holy Sacrament*. I have already shewn, that the *Scripture* do's not inform us, what *Gesture* was us'd at the *Institution of the Lord's Supper*: and I desire those, who contend for a common *Table gesture*, and particularly *Sitting*, to observe, that the *Primitive Church* thought sitting to be a very irreverent *Posture* in the *Service of God*. The *Laodicean Synod*, finding great inconveniences to arise from the *Love Feasts*, which were kept at the same time with the *Lord's Supper*, forbid the said *Feasts*, and the lying upon *Couches* in the *Church*, as their manner was at those *Feasts*. The same *Practice* was forbidden by the *Council of Carthage*, c. 28. and the *Decree* was Ratify'd by the sixth *Trullan Council*, c. 74. and that under the pain of *Excommunication*. Now the *Reasons*, upon which 'twas forbidden, were in all probability taken from the disorder and irreverence, the animosities and excess, that accompany'd those *Feasts*.

*Justin Martyr*, who liv'd in the *Second Century*, saies, *We rise up together and send up our Prayers*, *Apol. 2.* from whence 'tis clear, that they did not *Sit*: but in most other places they were not permitted to sit at all, not so much as at the *Lessons* or in *Sermon-time*; as appears plainly from  
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what *Philostorgius* (g) observes of *Theophilus* an *Indian* Bishop, That among several irregularities, which he corrected in those Churches, he particularly Reform'd this, *That the People were wont to Sit, when the Lessons out of the Gospel were read unto them;* and *Sozoman* (h) notes it as a very unusual thing in the Bishop of *Alexandria*, *that he did not rise up when the Gospels were read.*

*Optatus* Bishop of *Milevis* (i) cites a passage out of the 50th *Pfalm*, and applies it home to *Parmenianus* the *Donatist*; after this manner; *Thou sittest and speakest against thy Brother, &c.* in which place God reproves him that sits and defames his Brother: and therefore such evil Teachers as you, saies he, are more particularly pointed at in the Text, *For the People are not Licens'd to sit in the Church.* Now if it had not been the general Custom to stand the whole time of Divine Service, and particularly at the Lessons and Sermons, *Parmenianus* might easily have retorted this Argument upon *Optatus*, as concluding nothing against him in particular, but what might be charg'd in common upon all private Christians, who sat in the Church as well as he.

(k) *Tertullian* reproves it as an ill custom, *that some were wont to sit at Prayers;* and a little further in the same Chapter he has these words; *Add therewith the Sin of irreverence, which the very Heathens, if they did perceive well and understand what we did, wou'd take notice of. For if it be irreverent to sit in the presence of, and to confront, one whom you have a high respect and veneration for; how much*

(g) Hist. Eccles. l. 3. p. 29. (h) Hist. Eccles. l. 7. c. 19.  
 (i) De Schism. Donat. l. 4. See also *Albaspin.* not. in *Optat.*  
 (k) De *Ques.* c. 12.

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*more irreligious is this gesture in the sight of the living God, the Angel of Prayer yet standing by? Unless we think fit to upbraid God that Prayer has tir'd us. Eusebius also (1) commends Constantine, because when he was present at a long Panegyric concerning Christ's Sepulchre, and was solicited to sit down, he refus'd to do so, saying, it was unfit to attend upon any Discourse concerning God with ease and softness, and it was very Consonant to Piety and Religion, that Discourses about Divine things shou'd be heard standing.*

Thus much may suffice for satisfaction, that the ancient Church did by no means approve of Sitting, or a common Table gesture, as fitting to be us'd in Divine Service, except at the Reading of the Lessons, and hearing of the Sermon; which too was only practis'd in some places; for in others the People were not allow'd to sit at all in their Religious Assemblies. Which Custom is still observ'd in most, if not all, the Eastern Churches at this day, wherein there are no Seats erected or allow'd for the use of the People.

Now if the Apostles had Taught and Establish'd Sitting (not only as convenient, but) as necessary to be us'd in order to worthy receiving the Lord's Supper; 'tis most strange and unaccountable, 1. That there shou'd be such an early and universal revolt of the Primitive Church from the Doctrin and Constitutions of the Apostles. 2. That so many Churches in distant Countries, being perfectly Free and Independent one upon another, shou'd unanimously conspire together to introduce a novel-custom contrary to the Apostolical Practice and Or-

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(1) De Vis Constant. l. 4.

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which is the same thing, and will sufficiently justify the present Practice of the Church, as being agreeable to that of pure Antiquity. For the proof of this, numerous Testimonies both of *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers might be alledg'd; but I will content my self (and I hope, the Reader too) with a few of each sort, which are so plain and express, that he who will except against them, will also with equal confidence except against the Whiteness of Snow, and the Light of the Sun at Noon-day.

And first for the *Greek* Fathers, let the Testimony of (o) St. Cyril be heard, than which nothing can be more plain and express to our purpose. This holy Father in a Place before cited, instructs the Communicants, how to behave themselves when they approach the Lord's Table, and that in the Act of receiving both the Bread and the Wine. At the receiving of the Cup he advises thus; *Approach* (saies he) *not rudely stretching forth thy hands, but bowing thy self, and in a posture of Worship and Adoration, saying Amen.* In like manner (p) St Chrysostom speaks in his Fourteenth Homily on the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, where he provokes and excites the Christians of his time to an awful and reverential carriage at the Table of the Lord, by the Example of the Wise Men, who ador'd our Savior in his Infancy, after this manner; *This Body the Wise Men reverenc'd even when it lay in the Manger, and approaching thereunto, worshipp'd it with fear and great trembling. Let us therefore who are Citizens of Heaven, imitate at least those Barba-*

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(o) St Cyril *Hierosol.* Mystag. Catech. 5. versus finem. *Parisi*  
 Edit. p. 244. (p) 24 Hom. Ep. ad Cor. p. 538. Tom. 9. *Parisi*  
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rians. But thou seest this Body, not in a Manger, but on the Altar; not held by a Woman, but by the Priest, &c. Let us therefore stir up our selves, and be horribly afraid, and manifest a much greater Reverence than those Barbarians, lest coming lightly, and at a venture, we heap fire on our heads. The same Father in another place expressly bids them to fall down and Communicate, when the Table is made ready, and the King himself there: and in order to beget in their Minds great and awful Thoughts concerning that Holy and Mystericus Feast, he further exhorts them, (p) *That when they saw the Chancel doors open, then they should suppose Heaven it self was unfolded from above, and that the Angel descended, to behold, I suppose he means, their carriage and behavior at the Table of the Lord, and by giving their attendance to grace that Solemnity. With the Testimony of these Ancient Writers Theodorit agrees, who in a Dialogue between an Orthodox Christian and an Heretic, brings in Orthodoxus thus discoursing of the Supper of the Lord. The mysterious Symbols or Signs in the Sacrament (viz. Bread and Wine) depart not from their proper Nature; for they continue in their former Essence, and keep their former Shape and Form, and approve themselves both to our sight and touch to be as they were before: (q) but they are consider'd for such as they are made (that is, in respect to their Spiritual signification, and that Divine use to which they were consecrated) and are believ'd and ador'd as those very things which they are believ'd to be. Which words plainly import thus much, that*

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(p) St. Chrys. Hom. 3. in Ep. ad Ephes. in moral. p. 1151.  
 (q) Dialog. 2. To. 4. p. 85. Paris Edit.



the consecrated Elements were receiv'd with a Gesture of Adoration ; and at the same time assure us, that such a Behavior at the Lord's Supper was not founded upon the Doctrin of Transubstantiation. For there is not a more manifest instance in all the Ancients against that absurd Doctrin, which the Roman Church so obstinately believes at this very day, than what *Theodorit* gives us in the words abovemention'd. Lastly, (to alledge no more out of the *Greek Fathers*) that Story which *Gregory Nazianzen* (r) relates concerning *Gorgonia*, will much confirm what has been said, viz. That being sick, and having us'd several Medicins in vain, at last she resolv'd upon this course. She went in the stillness of the Night to the public Church, and having with her some of the consecrated Elements which she had reserv'd at home, *she fell down on her knees before the Altar*, and with a loud Voice pray'd to him whom she Ador'd, and in conclusion was healed. I am not much concern'd, whether the Reader will believe or censure this Miracle ; but it's certain, that this famous Father has Recorded it, and commends his Sister for the way she took for her Recovery. This is home to my purpose ; and clearly discovers that *Gorgonia* did Kneel, or at least us'd a Posture of Adoration, when she eat the Sacramental Bread. And without doubt in Communicating she observ'd the same Posture that others generally did in public : She did that in her sickness, which all others us'd to do in their health, when they came to the Sacrament ; *that is, She Kneeled down*.

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(r) Orat. in laud. *Gorgon.* p. 187. Paris. Edit.

For it can't be suppos'd, that at this time, when she came to beg so great a Blessing of Almighty God in the public Church, and at the Altar, call'd by the Ancients *The Place of Prayer*, she wou'd be guilty of any misbehavior, and make use of a singular Posture, different from what was generally us'd by Christians when they came to the same place to communicate, and pray over the great Propitiatory Sacrifice ; which they lookt upon as the most powerful and effectual way of Praying, the most likely to render God favorable to them, and to prevail with him above all other Prayers, which they offer'd at any other time, or in any other place. So much for the Authorities of the *Greek* Fathers, who were Men eminent for Learning and Piety in their Daies, and great Lights and Ornaments in the Primitive Church. With these the *Latn* Fathers fully agree in their Judgments concerning our present Case. And of these I will only mention two (tho' more might be produc'd) and those very eminent and illustrious Persons, had in great veneration by the then present Age wherein they flourish'd, and by succeeding Generations. The first is (f) *St. Ambrose* Bishop of *Milan*, in a Book he wrote concerning the Holy Ghost, where inquiring after the meaning of the Psalmist, when he exhorts Men to exalt the Lord, and to worship his Footstool, he gives us the sense in these words : That it seems to belong unto the mystery of our Lord's Incarnation ; and then goes on to shew for what Reason it may be accommodated to that Mystery, and at last concludes thus ; *By the Footstool therefore is the Earth to be*

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(f) *Ambrosi. de Sp. Sanct. l. 3. c. 12.*

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understood, and by the Earth the Body of Christ, which at this day too we adore in the Sacrament, and which the Apostles worshipp'd in the Lord Jesus, &c. St. Austin (Bishop of Hippo) Comments on the very same words, and to the same purpose. For thus he resolves that Question, How or in what Sense the Earth his Footstool, may be worshipp'd without impiety? *Because he took earth of the earth, for flesh is of the earth; and he took flesh of the flesh of Mary; and because he convers'd here in the flesh, and gave us his very flesh to eat unto Salvation. Now there is none who eateth that flesh, but first worshippeth. We have found then how this Footstool may be ador'd; so that we are so far from sinning by adoring, that we really sin if we do not adore.* In the Judgment therefore of these Primitive Bishops, we may lawfully adore at the Mysteries, tho' not the Mysteries themselves; at the Sacraments, tho' not the Sacraments themselves; the Creator in the Creature which is sanctify'd, not the Creature it self; as a late (t) Protestant Writer of great Learning and Quality among the *French*, distinguishes upon the forecited words of Saint Ambrose.

I think it appears evident from these few Instances, that the Primitive Christians us'd a posture of adoration at the Communion in the act of receiving. It were easy to bring a cloud of other Witnesses, if it were necessary so to do, either to prove or clear the cause in hand: but since there is no need to clog the Discourse with numerous References and Appeals to Antiquity, it wou'd but obscure the Argument, and tend in all

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(t) *Phil. Mornay du Plessis de Missa*, l. 4. c. 7. p. 732.

likeli.

likelihood rather to confound and distast, than convince and gratify the Reader.

By what has been already alleg'd, the practise of our Church in Kneeling at the Sacrament is sufficiently justify'd, as agreeable to the Customs and Practise of pure and Primitive Christianity. For if the Ancients did at the Sacrament use a Posture of Worship and Adoration (which 'tis very plain they did) then Kneeling is not repugnant to the practise of the Church in the first and purest Ages; no, tho' we shou'd suppose, that Kneeling was never practis'd among them; which will be plain, if we cast our Eyes a little upon that heavy charge which some of the fiercest, but less prudent, Adversaries of Kneeling have exhibited against it. They object against Kneeling, as being an adoring Gesture; for they affirm, *(u) That to Kneel in the act of Receiving, before the consecrated Bread and Wine, is formal Idolatry. So also to Kneel before any Creature as a memorative object of God, tho' there be no intention of giving Divine adoration to that Creature, is Idolatry.* Now if the Primitive Christians may be suppos'd to prostrate themselves before the Altar upon their first approach thereto in order to Receive, or immediately after they had Receiv'd the Bread and the Cup from the Hand of the Minister; or if they bow'd their Heads and Bodies after a lowly manner, in the act of Receiving; or if they receiv'd it standing upright, and eat and drank at the Holy Table with their Hands and Eyes lifted up to Heaven; then they incurr'd the Guilt of Idolatry, as well as we who Kneel at the Lord's Supper, in the Judgment of those

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*(u) Gillesp. p. 166, 172. Altar. Damasc. p. 801. Rutherford. Divine Right of Ch. Gov. c. 1. Qu. 5. Sect. 1, 3.*

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*Scotch Casuists* ; and by Consequence, Kneeling at the Blessed Sacrament according to the Custom of our Church, is not contrary to the practise of the Christian Church in the first and purest Ages, For all those Postures before mentioned were postures of Worship and Adoration, and us'd as such by the Primitive Christians ; especially standing, which is allow'd by the (w) Patrons of sitting, to be anciently and generally us'd in time of Divine Worship, and particularly in the act of Receiving.

To conclude all with an Instance in their own Case about a common Table gesture, let us suppose the Primitive Christians in some places did receive the Holy Sacrament sitting, or lying along upon Beds, according to the ancient Custom in those Eastern Countries at their common and ordinary Tables ; let us put the case that in other places they sat cross-legg'd on Carpets at the Sacrament, as the *Persians* and *Turks* eat at this day ; or that they receiv'd standing in other places, after the common mode of Feasting ; which we will suppose only at present. Cou'd any Man now object with reason against the lawfulness of sitting upright at the Sacrament upon a Form or Chair (according to the Custom of *England*) as being contrary to the Practise of all the Ancients, who never sat at all ? No certainly. For tho' they differ from the Ancients as to the site of their Bodies, and the particular manner of Receiving ; yet they all consent in this, that they receive in a common Table gesture. They all observe the same Gesture at the Sacrament, that they constantly observ'd at their Civil

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(w) *Gillep*. Disp. against E. Po. Cer. p. 101. Disp. of Kneec.  
P. 93.

Feasts and ordinary Entertainments in the several places of their abode. And so I say in the present Case; What tho' some of the Primitive Christians stood upright at the Sacrament, and others bow'd their Heads and Bodies in the act of Receiving, and none of them ever us'd Kneeling? Yet they and we do very well agree for all that, because we all receive in an adoring or worshipping Posture. It is one and the same thing variously express'd, according to the modes of the different Countries.

*Fifthly*, and lastly, I am to prove, that *Kneeling is not therefore unlawful, because 'twas first introduced by Idolaters, and is still notoriously abus'd by the Papists to Idolatrous ends and purposes.* This will appear, if we consider, 1. That it can never be prov'd, that *Kneeling* in the act of receiving was brought in by Idolaters, as is pretended. 2. That 'tis not sinful to use such things, as are or have been notoriously abus'd to Idolatry.

I. Then, it can never be prov'd, that *Kneeling* in the act of receiving was brought in by Idolaters. I have already made it very probable, that the Primitive Christians receiv'd the Sacrament *Kneeling*; and I hope our *Dissenters* will not charge them with Idolatry. I know, that they pretend the *Kneeling* posture was brought in by *Honorius the Third*; but that which he brought in, was a reverent Bow to the Sacrament, when the Priest elevates the Patten or Chalice, or when the Host is carry'd to any Sick Person, and not any *Kneeling* in the act of receiving. For these are the very words of the Decree, (x) *That the Priests shou'd*

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(x) Decret. Greg. l. 3. tit. 41. c. 10.

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frequently instruct their People to Bow themselves reverently at the Elevation of the Host, when Mass. was celebrated, and in like manner when the Priest carry'd it abroad to the Sick. Nay, as Bishop Stillingfleet (y) saies, tho' Kneeling at the Elevation of the Host be strictly requir'd by the Roman Church, yet in the act of receiving it is not; as manifestly appears by the Pope's manner of receiving, which is not Kneeling, but either Sitting, as it was in Bonaventure's time; or after the fashion of Sitting, or a little Leaning upon his Throne, as he doth at this day.

If any shou'd ask, when the Gesture of Kneeling came in, I confess, I cannot certainly tell: but this is no Argument *against*; but rather *for*, the ancient and universal use of it. Novel customs are easily traced to their Originals: but generally we cannot tell from whence the most ancient usages of any Country are deriv'd.

However, I am so far from thinking (as our Dissenters do) that Kneeling owes its birth to the Doctrin of *Transubstantiation*, that I verily believe, that the Kneeling or Adoring Gesture us'd by the ancient Church in the act of receiving, did very much (among other things) conduce to beget and cherish in the minds of superstitious and fanciful Men, a conceit, that *Christ* was really and corporally present at the Sacrament; which conceit, by subtil and inquisitive heads, was in a little time improv'd and explain'd after this manner: That after the Elements of Bread and Wine were consecrated, they were thereby chang'd into the substance of *Christ's* natural Body and Blood. However, 'tis plain that the Patrons

of *Transubstantiation* did very early make use of this very Argument, to prove that they taught and believ'd no more than the Primitive Bishops and Christians did. For what else cou'd they intend or mean (say they) by that extraordinary Reverence and Devotion, which they manifested when they receiv'd the Dreadful Mysteries (as they call'd the Bread and Wine) if they were bare and empty Signs only, and not chang'd into the very Body and Blood of *Christ*? Which is in effect the very Argument us'd by (z) *Algerus*, a stout Champion for *Transubstantiation*. And (a) *Coster*, another *Popish* Writer, is so far from saying, even after *Transubstantiation* took place, that the *Pope* introduced it, that he thinks it an ancient Custom continu'd from the times of the Apostles. But,

II. Suppose it were otherwise, yet 'tis not sinful to use such things, that are or have been notoriously abus'd to Idolatry, as I shall shew in the next Chapter. I shall only observe at present, that if it be sinful to Kneel at the Sacrament, because that Gesture has been, and is notoriously abus'd by *Papists* to Idolatrous ends; then Sitting is also sinful, which is contended for with so much Zeal. For the *Pope* himself sits in the act of receiving, as was before noted; and that for the same Reason (saies a (b) *Popish* Author) which our *Dissenters* urge for Sitting, viz. because the Apostles sate at the first Institution of the Sacrament. And every Priest, by the order of the *Mass Book*, is to partake standing at the Altar, and not Kneeling there. Nay, if Kneeling be unlawful, because it has been abus'd to Idolatry; then we must ne-

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(z) *Alger. de Sacramentis*, l. 2. c. 3. (a) *Coster. Enchirid.* p. 353. Edit. 1590. (b) *Alex. Hales de Missa*, p. 2. quest. 10. p. 4.



ver receive the Holy Sacrament. For we must receive in some convenient posture, such as *Kneeling, Sitting, Discumbing, Standing*; and yet every one of these, either has been or is, notoriously abus'd by *Heathens* and *Papists* to Idolatrous ends.

I hope, I need not add, that it would be very unjust to say, that our Kneeling is an act of Worship to the outward Elements; when the Church has declar'd this to be *Idolatry to be abhorr'd of all Faithful Christians*.

I shall conclude this Chapter with the opinions of the *Dissenting Writers*. Mr *Tombes* has undertaken to shew, that whatever the Gesture of our Savior was, yet we are not obliged to it, *Theod.* p. 168. 'Tis granted by Mr. *Bains*, *Christian Lett.* 24. and Mr. *Bayly*, *Disswat. c.* 2, 6. that the nature of the Ordinance do's not make Sitting necessary, or forbid Kneeling; and Mr. *Bains*, *ibid.* grants that Kneeling is not Idolatrous; and Mr. *Cartwright*, who thought it inconvenient, yet did not think it unlawful, *Harmon. on Luke 22. 14.* Lastly, Mr. *Baxter*, *Christian Dir.* part 2. p. 111. *quest.* 3. *Sec.* 40. saies, *For Kneeling, I never heard any thing yet to prove it unlawful. If there be any thing, it must be either some Word of God, or the nature of the Ordinance which is suppos'd to be contradicted. But,* 1. *there is no word of God for any Gesture, nor against any. Christ's Example can never be prov'd to oblige us more in this, than in many circumstances, that are confess'd not obligatory; as that he deliver'd but to Ministers, and but to a Family, to Twelve, and after Supper, and on a Thursday Night, and in an Upper Room, &c. and his Gesture was not such a Sitting as ours. And,* 2. *for the nature of the Ordinance, it is mixt: and if it be lawful to take a Pardon from the King upon our Knees, I know not*  
*what*

*Of our Agreeing with the Ch. of Rome. 171*  
*what can make it unlawful to take a Seal'd Pardon*  
*from Christ (by his Ambassador) upon our Knees.*

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## C H A P. VIII.

*The Objection of our Symbolizing or Agreeing*  
*with the Church of Rome, Answer'd.*

**B**UT, say the *Dissenters*, there is so great an Agreement between your Church and the Church of *Rome*, that we cannot think Communion with your Church to be Lawful. They tell us, that our first Reformers were indeed excellent and worthy Persons for the times they liv'd in; that what they did, was very commendable, and a good Beginning; but they were forced to comply with the necessities of the Age, which wou'd not bear a compleat Reformation. They left a great deal of *Papish* trash in the Church, hoping by degrees to reconcile the *Papists* to it, or at least, that they might not make the Breach too wide, and too much prejudice or estrange them from it: but we now live under better means, have greater Light and Knowledge, and so a further and more perfect amendment is now necessary.

Now I cannot but inwardly reverence the judgment, as well as love the Temper of our first Reformers, who in their first Separations from *Rome*, were not nice or scrupulous beyond the just reasons of things. Doubtless they were in earnest enough, as to all true Zeal against the Corruptions of *that Church*, when they Seal'd the well-grounded offence they took at them, with their warmest Blood; and cheerfully underwent all the hardships that  
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the Primitive Christians signaliz'd their Profession with, rather than they wou'd intermix with *Rome*, in any usage of Worship or Article of Faith, that had the least savor of Idolatry, Superstition, or false Religion at all in it. And yet these Good and Wise Men, when they had the Power and Opportunity of Reforming wholly in their hands, being equally jealous of *Enthusiasm*, as they were of *Superstition*, wou'd not give themselves up to such *fantastick Antipathies*, as to abolish this or that Custom, merely because it had been us'd among the *Papists*, if some other very substantial Reason did not plead against it. And verily, had they not alwaies us'd these temperate and unbyass'd methods of Reformation, they wou'd not so easily have justify'd themselves to their Adversaries, or the World; or have made it so evident (as by their prudent conduct they did) that what was done by them, was from the mere urgencies of Conscience and Reason, and not the wantonness of Change and Innovation. So that, where any mean honestly (as I doubt not but many of those do, that Dissent from us) they ought to have their Reason very well awake, that the mere charge of *Popery* upon any disputed point, may not so prejudice them in their inquiries into things, as to leave no room for mature Consideration.

However, that I may fully answer this objection, drawn from our agreement with the Church of *Rome*, I shall endeavor to shew, 1. That *there is a vast distance between the Churches of England and Rome*. 2. That *a Church Symbolizing or agreeing in some things with the Churches of Rome, is no warrant for separation from the Church so agreeing*. 3. That *the agreement between the Churches of England*

land and Rome is in no wise such, as will make Communion with the Church of England unlawful.

I. Then, I shall shew, that *there is a vast distance between the Churches of England and Rome*; as appears by our Churches having renounc'd all Communion with *Rome*, and utterly cast off the *Pope's* Power. But I shall descend to particulars, and shew the vast distance between them,

*First, In all those Doctrins and Practises, whereby the Church of Rome deprives her Members of their due Liberty, and miserably enslaves them.* For, 1. She denies them all judgment of discretion in matters of Religion, and binds them all, under pain of damnation, to *Believe* her infallible: but our Church permits us to *prove all things*, that we may hold fast *that which is good*; she disclaims all pretense to *infallibility*, and owns her self to be obnoxious to error in matters of Faith. 2. The Church of *Rome* imposes a most slavish drudgery in the vast multitudes of vain and childish, odd and uncouth Rites and Ceremonies, which a Man wou'd wonder how they cou'd invent. The like may be said of their cruel Penances, in imposing of which the Priests are arbitrary. But our Rites are exceeding *few, plain, easy, grave and manly*; founded on the Practice of the Church, long before *Popery* appear'd in the World. Our Sacraments are but two, and consequently we are not burden'd with the superstitious Fopperies of the other five *Popish* ones. In short, our *Rites* are agreeable to the Rules of *doing things decently, and in order, and doing all things to Edification.* Nor do's our Church impose them (like the Church of *Rome*) as necessary, and as parts of Religion, but as merely *indifferent and changeable* things. As for our Penances, 'tis needless to shew that they are not cruel, like those

of Rome. 3. The Church of Rome subjects her Members by several of her Doctrins to enslaving Passions. For instance, *Purgatory* subjects them to fear, and *auricular confession* to shame, and the dependence of the efficacy of the Sacraments upon the Priest's intention exposes them to great anxiety. But our Church rejects the Doctrins of *Purgatory*, and the dependence of the efficacy of the Sacraments upon the Priest's intention; and do's not oblige her Members to confess their Sins to Men, but when for the relief of their Consciences, or making Satisfaction, &c. it is their duty so to do. 4. The Church of Rome maintains Licentious Principles and Practises, which our Adversaries cannot charge upon the Church of England.

Secondly, In all those Doctrins and Practises, in which the Church of Rome is justly charg'd with plainly contradicting the Scripture. For instance, our Church rejects and utterly abhors the Popish Doctrins and Practises of *Image Worship*, *Invocation of Saints*, *Transubstantiation*, *Pardons*, *Indulgences*, *Sacrifice of the Mass*, denying the Bible to the Vulgar, *Prayers and Sacraments in an unknown Tongue*, robbing the Laity of the Cup in the Lord's Supper, prohibiting Marriage to Priests, *Merit*, *Supererogation*, making simple Fornication a mere venial Sin, damning all that are not of her Communion, &c. Nor is there any Church, that more severely condemns all instances of unrighteousness and immorality, than the Church of England do's.

Thirdly, In their public Prayers and Offices. To shew this in all particulars wou'd be a tedious task; therefore I shall instance only in the Office of *Infant Baptism*, by which the Reader may judge of the rest.

Before they go into the Church, after many preparatory prescriptions, the Priest being drest in a Surplice and purple Robe, calls the Infant, saying, *what askest thou, &c.* The Godfather answers, *Faith.* P. *What shalt thou get by Faith?* G. *Eternal Life.* P. *If thou therefore, &c.* Then the Priest blows three gentle puffs upon the Infant's Face, and saies, *Go out of him, O unclean Spirit, &c.* Then Crossing the Infant's Forehead and Breast, he saith, *Receive the sign of the Cross, &c.* Then he praies, that God would alwaies, &c. And after a long Prayer (the Priest laying his Hand on the Infant's Head) comes the idle and profane Form of the *Benediction of Salt*; viz. *I conjure thee, O creature of Salt, in the Name, &c.* with many Crossings. Then he puts a little Salt into the Infant's Mouth, saying, *Take thou the Salt of Wisdom*; (and adds most impiously) *be it thy Propitiation unto Eternal Life.* After the *Pax tecum* he praies, *that this Infant, &c.* Then the Devil is conjur'd again, and most wofully be-call'd. Then the Priest Crosses the Infant's Forehead, saying, *And this sign, &c.* Then he puts his Hand on the Infant's Head, and puts up a very good Prayer.

Then he puts part of his Robe upon the Infant, and brings him within the Church, saying, *Enter thou, &c.* Then follow the *Apostles Creed* and the *Pater noster*. Then the Devil is conjur'd again; and the Priest takes spittle out of his Mouth, and therewith touches the Infant's Ears and Nostrils, saying, &c. Then he conjures the Devil again, saying, *Be packing, O Devil, &c.* Then he asks the Infant, whether he renounces the Devil, &c. Then dipping his Thumb in *Holy Oyl*, and anointing the Infant with it in his Breast and betwixt his Shoulders, he saies, *I anoint thee, &c.*  
Then

Then he puts off his *Purple Robe*, and puts on another of *White* colour, and having ask'd four more Questions, and receiv'd the Answers, he pours Water thrice upon the Child's Head, as he recites over it our Savior's Form of Baptism. Then dipping his Thumb in the *Chrism* or *Holy Ointment*, he anoints the Infant upon the Crown of his Head in the figure of a Cross, and praies, *O God Omnipotent*, &c. Afterwards he takes a white linen cloath, and putting it on the Child's Head, saies, *Take the white Garment*, &c. Lastly, he puts into the Child's or his Godfather's Hand, a lighted Candle, saying, *Receive the burning Lamp*, &c. Besides those things which are in the *Common Ritual*, there are divers others added in the *Pastorals*, which I shall not mention. And now, if any Man will read our *Office of Baptism*, he will acknowledge, that no two things can be more unlike, than *these two Offices* are.

Our *Litany* indeed has been Condemn'd by *Dissenters*, as favoring of *Popish* Superstition; but nothing is more false, if a Man compares it with the *Popish* one, the greater part of which consists in invocation of Saints and Angels. But the Brevity I am confin'd to in this Discourse, will not permit me to abide any longer upon this Argument.

*Fourthly*, In the Books they receive for Canonical. For the Church of *Rome* takes all the *Apocryphal* Books into the Canon: but the Church of *England* takes only those, which the Primitive Church and all Protestants acknowledge. 'Tis true, she reads some part of the *Apocryphal* Books for instruction of manners; but she do's not establish any Doctrine by them.

*Fifthly*,

*Fifthly and Lastly, in the Authority on which they found their whole Religion.* The Church of *Rome* founds the Authority of the *Scriptures* upon her own infallibility; and the Authority of many of her own Doctrins on unwritten Traditions, and the Decrees of her Councils, which she will have to be no less inspir'd than the *Prophets* and *Apostles*: but the Church of *England* builds her whole Religion upon *Scripture*, which is her rule of Faith and Practice. She Reverences ancient general Councils: but do's not think them infallible. And as for that *Authority*, which our Church claims in *Controversies of Faith*, by requiring subscription to thirty-nine Articles, 'tis plain that she means no more Authority, than to oblige her Members to outward Submission, when her decisions do not contradict any essentials of *Faith* or *Manners*; but not an Authority to oblige Men to believe them infallibly true; and this is necessary for the Peace of any Church. 'Tis true, she thinks it convenient, that none shou'd receive Orders, be admitted to Benefices, &c. but such as do believe them, not all as Articles of our Faith, but many as inferior Truths; and she requires Subscription as a Test of this belief: but the Church of *Rome* requires all Persons under pain of damnation to believe all her false and wicked Doctrins, as much as the most undoubted Articles of Faith; as may be seen in the *Creed* of *Pius* the Fourth.

As to the Motives which our Church proposes for our belief of the Doctrin of the *Holy Scriptures*, they are such as are found in the *Scriptures* themselves; viz. the excellency of them, and the Miracles which confirm them: and as to the Truth of the Matters of Fact, she places it (not in the Testimony of any particular Church, but)



in the *Universal Tradition of Jews and Pagans, as well as all Christians.*

II. I am to shew, that a Church's symbolizing or agreeing in some things with the Church of Rome, is no warrant for separation from the Church so agreeing. The Dissenters tell us, that those things which are indifferent in their own nature, do cease to be indifferent and become sinful, if they have been us'd in the Church of Rome. For, say they, we read, *Lev. 18. 2. After the doings of the Land of Egypt wherein ye dwell, shall ye not do, and after the doings of the Land of Canaan, whether I bring you, shall ye not do, neither shall ye walk in their Ordinances.* Now, not to insist on the vast difference of our Circumstances from those of the *Israelites*, I answer, that it is an absurd thing to imagin, that the *Israelites* were so bound up by God, as to be obliged to be unlike those People in all their Actions. The things forbidden from *verse 5th. to 24th.* are not indifferent, but *Incestuous Copulations and acts of uncleanness*; and God do's expressly enough restrain that general Prohibition to those particulars, in saying, *v. 24th. Defile not your selves in any part of these things, for in all these the Nations are defil'd, which I cast out before you.* And they were therefore forbidden under the notion of things done after the doings of the *Egyptians* and the *Canaanites*, because they were the doings of those People, whom they were exceedingly prone to imitate, even in their greatest immoralities.

If it be said, that in other places God forbids the *Israelites* to imitate the *Heathens* in things of an indifferent nature; I answer, 1. That supposing this were so, it do's not from thence follow, that God intended to forbid such imitations in this place;

place; the contrary being so manifest, as we have seen. But, 2. That God has any where prohibited the *Israelites* to symbolize with *Heathens*, in things of a mere indifferent and innocent nature; I mean, that he has made it unlawful for them to observe any such Customs of the *Heathens*, merely upon the account of their being like them, is a very great mistake: Which will appear by considering those places which are produced for it. One is *Deut. 14. 1. You shall not cut your selves, nor make any baldness between your Eyes for the dead.* Now, as to the former of these prohibited things, who sees not, that 'tis unnatural, and therefore not indifferent? And as to the latter, viz. the disfiguring of themselves by cutting off their Eye-brows, this was not merely indifferent neither; it being a Custom at Funerals misbecoming the people of God, and which wou'd make them look as if they sorrow'd for the Dead as Men without hope. Another place is *Lev. 19. 19. Thou shalt not let thy Cattle gender with a diverse kind; thou shalt not sow thy Ground with mingled Seed; nor shall a garment of linen and woollen come upon thee.* But I answer, that tho' these things are indeed indifferent in their own nature, yet they are forbidden (not because the *Heathens* us'd them, but) because they were mystical instructions in moral duties.

If it be objected also, that God forbid the *Jews*, *Hos. 2. 16, 17.* to call him by the Name of *Baali*, which was a very good Name, and signify'd only *My Lord*, because that word was abus'd in being the name of the Idol *Baal*; I answer, that God did not forbid the Name *Baali*, because an *Idol* was call'd by that name; for he is call'd *Baal* in other places of the *Hebrew Bible*.

and also *Jah*, which the *Heathens* us'd for an *Idol* ; but because the word *Baali* signifies an *unkind Husband* or *Lord*, such as *Baal* was to his worshippers ; whereas God promises he wou'd be call'd *Isbi*, that is, a *tenderly loving Husband* ; for he design'd to be kind to his People *Israel*. I shall add, that *Baalim* in the next *verse* signifies *Idols*, which God there promises to destroy. But suppose that God forbid the *Jews* to call him *Baal* for the future, yet it might be because of their vehement inclination to the worship of *Baal*, lest by using it they shou'd be tempted to worship him again : whereas our Ceremonies were us'd by the ancient Fathers without any *Superstition* or *Idolatry*, and we are not in danger of returning to *Popery* by retaining them.

Well ; but they say, it appears from *Scripture Precepts* and *Examples*, that it is unlawful to symbolize with the Church of *Rome* in things that have been *notoriously abus'd in Idolatrous and grossly Superstitious Services*. To this I answer,

*First*, that it is not sinful to use those things which have been abus'd to Idolatry, as I shall prove by these following Arguments.

1. No abuse of any Gesture, tho' it be in the most manifest Idolatry, doth render that Gesture simply evil, and for ever after unlawful to be us'd in the Worship of God upon that account. For the abuse of a thing supposes the lawful use of it ; and if any thing otherwise lawful becomes sinful by an abuse of it, then 'tis plain that it is not in its own nature sinful, but by accident, and with respect to somewhat else. This is clear from *Scripture* ; for if Rites and Ceremonies, after they have been abus'd by Idolaters, become absolutely evil, and unlawful to be us'd at all ; then the *Jews* sinn'd

finn'd in *offering Sacrifices*, erecting *Altars*, burning *Incense* to the God of Heaven, *bowing down* themselves before him, wearing a *Linen Garment* in the time of Divine Worship, and observing other Things and Rites which the *Heathens* observ'd in the worship of false Gods.

If the *Dissenters* say, they except all such Rites as were commanded or approv'd of by God ; I reply, that such an exception avails nothing. For if the abuse of a thing to Idolatry makes it absolutely sinful, and unlawful to be us'd at all, then it's impossible to destroy that Relation, and what has been once abus'd, must ever remain so ; that is, an infinite Power can't undo what has been done, and clear it from ever having been abus'd. And therefore I conclude from the Command and Approbation of God, that a bare conformity with Idolaters in using those Rites in the Worship of the true God, which they practise in the Worship of Idols, is not simply sinful, or formal Idolatry. For if it be ; God had obliged the Children of *Israel* by his express Command to commit Sin, and to do what he strictly and severely prohibited in other places. In truth, such a Position wou'd plainly make God the Author of Sin.

2. This Principle intrenches upon *Christian Liberty*, if *St. Paul* himself may judge, who tels us, *1 Cor. 10. 25, &c.* that *to the pure all things are pure*, and affirms it lawful to eat of such things as had been offer'd up in Sacrifice to Idols, and *to eat whatsoever was sold in the Shambles*. And what reason is there, why a Gesture shou'd be more defil'd by Idolaters, than Meat which they had Offer'd up in Sacrifice to Idols ? And why shou'd one be Sinful and Idolatrous to use, and not the other ? Certainly *St. Paul* wou'd never have granted them such a privilege.

if he judg'd it Idolatrous to use what Idolaters had abus'd: especially considering that he in the same Chapter exhorts them earnestly to *fly from Idolatry*.

3. This Principle subjects the Minds of Christians to infinite fears, scruples and perplexities: whereas the true and great design of the Gospel is to breed in Men a filial cheerful frame of heart, the *spirit of love, and of a sound or quiet mind*; to give us a free, easy, comfortable access to God as to our Father; and to encourage every good Man to a diligent, constant, and frequent attendance upon his Worship, by the delight that follows it. But now, if nothing may be us'd by us without highly offending God, that either has been, or is abus'd to Idolatry; who sees not what trouble and distraction will arise in our Minds hereupon, when we meet together to worship God? It's well known, that most of our *Churches* were erected by *Idolatrous Papists*, and as much defil'd by Idolatry as any Gesture can be. They are dedicated to several *Saints* and *Angels*, whose Images were once set up and ador'd. Our *Bells, Pews, Fonts, Desks, Church-yards*, have been consecrated after a superstitious manner. Many *Cups, Flagons, Dishes, Communion-Tables*, have been given and us'd by Idolaters. What now is to be done? Perhaps all these things have been abus'd; and if certain information cannot be had, we can't worship in public without great disquiet of Mind.

4. This Principle will destroy all public Worship. For if nothing must be us'd which has been, or is abus'd by Idolaters; it will be in the power of Idolaters, by ingrossing all the outward marks  
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and signs of that inward veneration and esteem which we owe to God, to smother our Devotions, so as they shall never appear in the World; and by that means frustrate the very end and design of Religious Assemblies. And truly this work is already, by the strength of this Principle, very well effected. For *kneeling* at Prayers, and *standing*, and *sitting*, and lifting up the Hands and Eyes to Heaven, and bowing of the Body, together with Prayer and Praise and Singing, have been all notoriously abus'd to Idolatry, and are so to this day. If the *Dissenters* say, they except such things as are necessary to be us'd in the Service of God, tho' they have been abus'd by Idolaters; I reply, that so long as the reasons hold to make any thing sinful, so long it is so. If the use or abuse of any thing by Idolaters make it simply evil; then it must for ever remain so, and no necessity whatsoever can make it lawful. So that this Principle drives us into such streights, that we must sin one way or other. For either we must not worship God in public, or we must be guilty of *Idolatry* if we do: and tho' of two Evils or Calamities the least is to be chosen, yet of two Sins neither is. Christian Religion flows from infinite Wisdom; and the Laws of God do not cross one another, but are even and consistent. We are never cast by God under a necessity of sinning, of transgressing one Law by the observance of another: but thus it must be, if we take up and stick to this Principle.

5. The *Dissenters* condemn themselves in what they allow and practise, by the same Rule by which they condemn Kneeling at the Sacrament, and other Rites of our Church. For they themselves did use, without scruple, such *Places* and

*Things and Postures* as had been defil'd and abus'd by *Idolaters*. They were wont to be bare-headed in time of God's Service, at Prayer, and at the Sacrament; and so do *Idolatrous Papists*. They never declar'd, that it was sinful to kneel at our Prayers, both public and private; yet this Gesture the *Papists* use in their Prayers to the *Virgin Mary*, to the *Cross*, to *Saints* and *Angels*. They us'd our Churches, Church-yards and Bells, and never thought they sinn'd against God by so doing; tho' they knew they had been abus'd. Nay, the *Directory* (a) declares, *That such places are not subject to any such Pollution by any Superstition formerly us'd, and now laid aside, as may render them unlawful and inconvenient.* Mr. *Rutherford* (b) saies of Bells grossly abus'd in time of Popery, *That it is unreasonable and groundless, that thereupon they shou'd be disus'd.* Upon which the Learned Dr. *Falkner* has this excellent Remark; The pretense of their convenient usefulness, wou'd be no better excuse on their behalf, than was the Plea for sparing the best of the *Amalekites* Cattle, that they might be a Sacrifice, when God had devoted them to Destruction. For if God (as they say) had commanded, that all such Things and Rites shou'd be utterly abolish'd, as were of Man's devising and had been abus'd to Idolatry; then the convenient usefulness of such places and things will never bear them out.

6. If this Principle were true, it wou'd go nigh to throw a scorn upon all or most of the Reformati-  
ons that have been made from the *Church of*

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(a) Direct. of the day and place of worship, (b) *Rutherford of Scandal*, Q. 5, 6.

Rome ; for they do not seem to have govern'd themselves by this Rule. Some of them in their public Confessions (c) declaring, that they might lawfully retain such Rites and Ceremonies as are of advantage to Faith, the worship of God, or Peace and Order in the Church, *tho' they had been introduced by any Synod, or Bishop, or Pope, or any other.*

7. Nay, this Principle wou'd render *Christianity* impracticable; because there is no Circumstance, no Instrument, no Ministry in worship, but may have been some way or other abus'd by *Pagan* or *Romish* Idolatries. It wou'd make every Garment, of what shape, or of what colour soever, unfit for use in our Religious Service ; for not only the White, but the Red, the Green, and the Black, have been us'd (even for the significancy of their respective Colours) by the *Gentile* or *Romanist*, to very superstitious purposes in Divine Worship.

*Secondly*, There is no express Precept of this nature, and the Texts alleg'd do not infer it. For, 1. Tho' some Churches are blam'd for suffering some to teach the People to *eat things sacrificed to Idols*, Rev. 2. 14, 20. yet the instance is impertinent, because that was no better than Communicating in Idol Worship, as the *Gnostics* did. But St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. 8. 4, &c. and chap. 10. 27, 28, 29. that *eating things offer'd to Idols without any respect, to Idols in eating*, is unlawful upon no other account, but that of Scandal. 2. St. Jude's words, v. 23. *hating even the garment spotted by the Flesh*, teach us indeed to be as cautious of Temptations to Sin, as of the Garments of infected

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(c) Confess. Bohem. Art. 15.



Persons; but there is no danger, when they are well cleans'd from infection. 3. Tho the *Jews* were commanded to destroy Idols and the appurtenances of them, *Deut.* 7. 25, 26. because they were so prodigiously inclin'd to Idolatry; yet surely the *Dissenters* will not say, we must destroy all things that have been abus'd to superstitious uses; for then we must destroy our Bells and Fonts and Churches. Therefore, as Mr. Calvin, upon the *Second Commandment*, saies, *We do not in the least scruple, whether we may lawfully use those Temples, Fonts and other Materials, which have been heretofore abus'd to Idolatrous and Superstitious uses. I acknowledge indeed, that we ought to remove such things as seem to nourish Idolatry; upon supposition, that we our selves in opposing too rigorously things in their own nature indifferent, be not superstitious. It is equally superstitious to condemn things indifferent as unholy, and to command them as if they were holy.*

As for the example of *Hezekiah's* breaking in pieces the Brazen Serpent, because the Children of *Israel* burnt Incense to it, *2 Kings* 18. 4. it will not prove, that whatsoever has been notoriously defil'd in Idolatrous or grossly Superstitious Services, ought to be abolish'd; and much less, that the not abolishing some such things, is a good ground for separation from the Church that neglects so to do. For,

1. The Brazen Serpent was not only defil'd, but an *Idol it self*, and that at the very time when it was destroyed. Nay, it was worshipp'd by the generality of the People; to those daies the Children of *Israel* did burn Incense unto it; and there was little hope of their being reclaim'd, while the Idol stood; and moreover, the use of it was ceas'd  
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for which it was first erected. Now without doubt Governors ought to take away those indifferent things which have been abus'd, when the People are inclin'd to abuse them again; at least, if such abuse cannot probably be prevented by any other means; but then I deny, that our *Rites* have been or are any Temptation to *Idolatry*, or to the embracing of *Popery*.

Had *Hezekiah* suffer'd the Brazen Serpent still to stand, no doubt private Persons (who have no Authority to make public Reformati<sup>o</sup>ns) might lawfully have made use of it, to put them in mind of, and affect them with, the wonderful mercy of God, express'd by it to their Forefathers; notwithstanding that many had formerly made an Idol of it, and did so at that very time. And much more might they have lawfully continu'd in the Communion of the Church, so long as there was no constraint laid upon them to joyn with them in their *Idolatry*; nor do we read of any that separated from the Church, while the Brazen Serpent was permitted to stand, as wofully abus'd as it was by the generality.

2. If *Example* were a good way of Arguing, we find by *Hezekiah's* practice in *other* things, he did not think it an indispensable Duty, to abolish every thing that had been made use of to *Idolatry*; if it did not prove an immediate snare at that time. For as to the *Temples*, which *Solomon* had erected for no other end but the Worship of *false Gods*, 1 *Kings* 11. 7. *Hezekiah* did not make it his business to destroy *them*, as being in this time forlorn and neglected things, of which no bad use was then made. Altho' indeed King *Josiah* afterwards (probably upon the increase of *Idolatry*, and renew'd use of those places)

ces) found it expedient to lay them wholly waste, 2 Kings 22. 13. Let not any, says (d) Calvin, think me so austere or bound up, as to forbid a Christian without any exception, to accommodate himself to the Papists in any Ceremony or Observance; for it is not my purpose to condemn any thing, but what is clearly evil and openly vitious.

III. I proceed now in the last place to shew, that the Agreement between the Churches of England and Rome is in no wise such, as will make Communion with the Church of England unlawful. This I shall evince in the chief particulars, which our Dissenters take offence at.

First then, *Episcopacy* is so far from being an unlawful symbolizing with the Church of Rome, that it is an Apostolical Institution; and shall we allow the Pope so much power, as to make that unlawful by his use, which the Apostles and their Disciples have recommended to us by theirs? Nay, (e) Beza, P. du Moulin, and Calvin grant, that this was the Government of all Churches in the World, from the Apostles times for about 1500 Years together. Nor do I know how the Dissenters will defend the Observation of the Lord's Day, while they contend that *Episcopacy* cannot be concluded from the uninterrupted Tradition of the Church from the Apostles times: or how those that separate upon the account of *Episcopacy*, can defend the lawfulness of Communicating with any Christian Church for about 1500 Years together. I shall add no more upon this point; only I refer my Reader to Chillingworth's Institution of Episcopa-

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(d) De Vitand. Superstitione. (e) Bez. Episcop. du Moulin. Past. off. Calv. Inst. lib. 4. cap. 4. Sect. 2. & Epist. ad Reg. Pol.

cy, and *Stillington's* Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 244, &c.

*Secondly*, Our symbolizing with the Church of Rome in having set Forms of Prayer, is so far from being culpable, that 'tis highly commendable. For herein we symbolize with the Primitive Church; nor is any thing more expedient for the public Service of God, as I have already shewn in the *Third* Chapter. Now if the *Papists*, nay, if the *Heathens* us'd set Forms, because it was the fittest way for the Service of God; must we be forbidden to use them? Because they did well, are we therefore to do worse?

*Thirdly*, Our Liturgy in particular do's not so much symbolize with the *Roman* Service, as to cause a Separation. For tho' some Collects are taken out of the *Mass Book*; yet that is not enough to make them unlawful. For then the Lord's Prayer, the *Psalms*, and a great part of *Scripture* besides, and the Creeds also must never be us'd.

I know it has been said, that the *Scriptures* being of necessary use must be retain'd by us, tho' the Church of *Rome* retains them: but that there is not the same Reason for Forms, which are not necessary; and that in those we ought to go as far from that Church as we can. But what reason is there for this? For the danger that may happen to us in coming too near them, lies in things wherein they do ill, and not in things wherein they do well. No Man can shew a good reason why those Passages in the *Common Prayer Book*, which are to be found in the *Mass Book*, but which were us'd also by the Church before *Romanism* had corrupted it, are not as much to be valu'd, because they were once us'd by good Christians; as to be run down, because they have been  
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since us'd by Superstitious and Idolatrous Men. If any Man wou'd set himself to expose the *Mas-Book*, he wou'd, I suppose, lay hold upon nothing but the Corruptions that are in it, and things that are obnoxious to just reproof; not on things that are justifiable, and may easily be defended. And the Reason of this is plain, because the *Mas-Book* is to blame for those parts of it only, but not for these.

*Lastly*, Our symbolizing with the Church of Rome in the use of Ceremonies will not justify a separation. For ours are scarce the hundredth part of hers; nor are ours impos'd as necessary. If it be said, that Christ severely condemn'd the *Jewish Traditions*; I answer, that he condemn'd only those by which they made the Commandment of God of none effect, and in which they placed special holiness.

But to descend to particulars; 1. The *Surplice* in the Church of Rome is solemnly hallow'd, &c. but we use it only for Distinction and Uniformity, and place no more Holiness in it, than in the Hoods which denote Degrees. Besides, in the Primitive Church Ministers did officiate in White Garments; and *Beza* and *Calvin* were (f) against contending about the *Surplice*; and, *I pray, why is a Minister's Linen Garment more Popish, than a Lawyers Gown or a Judge's Robes?* Our famous *Hooker* (g) saies, *To solemn actions of Royalty and Justice, there futable Ornaments are a beauty; are they only in Religion a stain?* 2. The *Cross* in Baptism is not us'd by us, as 'tis by the Church of Rome. She enjoyns numberless Crossings in the Admini-

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(f) Cont Westph. Vol. I. p. 55. Epist. ad Bull. (g) *Eccles. Pol.* Book 5. 228.

stration of that Sacrament; but we retain it in Conformity to the ancient practice, and have abolish'd all Superstitious abuses of it. 3. *Kneeling at the Sacrament* is requir'd by us, only as a reverent Gesture; and the abuses of this kneeling in the Church of *Rome* are perfectly remov'd. The *Papists* indeed kneel to their Host, as to their God: but we do nothing like them; for we kneel not to the Bread and Wine, but at our Receiving of them. Now what they do on no reason, why may not we do on the best? especially when our Church declares, that Adoration of the Elements is *Idolatry to be abborr'd of all faithful Christians*. As we are not to disuse the Holy Sacrament, because the *Papists* have made it an Idol: so we may continue our reverence, tho' they have paid it Adoration. 4. The *Ring in Marriage* is most notoriously abus'd in the Church of *Rome*, as may be seen in their *Office*; but we practise no Superstition about it, and use it (not as a Sacramental sign, but) as a token of the Marriage Vow. *Lastly*, The Feasts and Fasts of our Church cannot be justly accounted *Popish*. For the time of Assembling is a Circumstance of our Worship that cannot be left to particular choice, but must be determin'd in Common; and what is to be done at that time, must be determin'd too in an Ordinary orderly Assembly: so that it must be left to the discretion of the Governors, when we are to keep a Festival, and when a Fast. As to the keeping of the Lord's Day, our Church was not at liberty; unless she wou'd have rashly departed from Apostolical observation, and the continu'd practices of all Ages and Places since the beginning of Christianity. As for the Keeping of *Easter*, she was under the like Obligation;

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the Yearly Feast of the Resurrection, the Great Lord's Day, being known to have been the Chief, and the Cause of all the Weekly. And as to the Fast of Good Friday, it was nigh as early as the Feast of the Resurrection. They lamented their Sins our Savior died for on the Friday before, as constantly as they Commemorated His Rising again for our Salvation the Sunday after. And in Order to the keeping of those two Great Daies with more Devotion, there was likewise some time before-hand set apart, for better Recollection and greater Preparation; the number of Daies was in some places greater, in some less. That of Forty had obtain'd in the *Western* Country, and therefore was still kept: and wou'd to God it were as Religiously observ'd, as it was Piously appointed. *Whitsunday* too, the day on which the Holy Ghost descended, was observ'd alwaies and in all places by the Ancient Church. Only the Nativity of our Savior was of later remembrance, but yet before *Popery* came in. 'Twas first observ'd in the *Western* Church; and afterwards taken up by the *Eastern*, in St. *Chrysostom's* time, as it stands recommended by him to the People of *Antioch*. Other times besides these, have been appointed for our Religious Assemblies; in which, besides the general Service of God, the Examples of his Saints and Martyrs are gratefully remembred and piously propos'd. Those Daies are call'd commonly by the Name of the Person then particularly Commemorated: Not that the Worship is to the Saint, or that the Day is imploy'd in his Honor; but because on the occasion of his Memory or Martyrdom we meet together, as to pay our other Duties to our God, so to thank him  
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for the Graces of his Servant, and to be Edify'd and instructed by the Example. It is true, that heretofore, when God had been bountiful to his Church in the Number of his Saints, the Rulers of it increas'd in some proportion the Daies of his Worship; and it is to be confess'd that *Popery* had both acknowledg'd Saints to God, which he might not own, and gave the true Saints an Honor which they must disclaim: but with us the number of those Daies is not greater than what the Affairs of the World may well comply with; and as the number of the Apostles is not large, so their Sanctity is not to be doubted of; and then on those Daies we neither beseech by their Merits, nor recommend our selves to their Intercession. You see then how unreasonable the Objection of *Popery* is here too. But see to what absurdity it go's on. First, it is suppos'd *Popery* to keep a Day in the Memory of an Apostle; and then it is thought as *Popish* to call him a Saint. A Great Person at *Geneva*, it seems, presum'd it somewhat *Popish* to observe Sunday it self; and consider'd about changing the Day. Nay, some are so perversely Superstitious on the other hand, as that That day, on which all the Christian World Remembers our Savior's *Bitter Passion*, has seem'd to them the fitter for a Feast; and the time which all other Christians set apart for the joyful Memory of his Nativity, the more proper for a Fast. This indeed is not like the *Papists*: No, it is like a *Jew* or a *Heathen*.

To conclude, by *Popery* nothing can be meant, but the corruptions and usurpations of the Church of *Rome*. For the Faith of that Church was once as fair spoken of, as its Errors are now; and had she continu'd in that purity, we ought to have  
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been of her Communion : and now we are to depart from her no otherwise, than she shall be found to have departed from her self, and to have corrupted that Doctrin which was once deliver'd unto the Saints. As we must not receive the Evil for the sake of the Good, so we must not reject the Good for the sake of the Evil. We have not one Doctrin or Ceremony that is *purely Popish* : but we must part with the best things in our Religion, if all those things are sinful, which the *Papists* abuse. And as for the *Papists* themselves, we do not in the least countenance them in those things wherein they are wrong, by agreeing with them in those things wherein they are right.

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## C H A P. IX.

### *The Objection of Mixt Communion, Answer'd.*

SOME think that the Church is to consist of none but real Saints; and therefore finding many corrupt Members in the *Church of England*, they separate from her Communion, and set up Churches of their own, consisting, in their judgment, of none but truly sanctify'd Persons. The Ground of this dangerous mistake is their false Notion of that Holiness, which the *Scripture* applies to God's Church.

*Holiness* in *Scripture* is twofold. 1. *Inherent Holiness*, and that can be in none properly but God, Angels and Men. In God Originally, as he is that Being, in whom all Excellencies do possess infinite Perfection; and hence he is call'd *the Holy One*

**One of Israel.** In *Angels and Men* by way of Participation. 2. *Relative Holiness* founded in a Separation of any thing from common Uses, and an appropriating it to the Service of God. Thus the Sabbath is *holy*, and *Judea* and *Jerusalem* are *holy*; and thus the Church is *holy*, that is, a Society separated from the World to serve God after a peculiar manner. Thus the *Israelites*, even when very much corrupted, were call'd God's *holy People*, *Deut.* 7. 6. and the Apostles call the Churches by the name of *Saints*, tho' there were strange immoralities amongst them, because they were separated to God and in Covenant with him.

Well; but did not Christ die, *that the Church shou'd be holy and without blemish*, *Eph.* 5. 27. that is, really holy? Yes, But then by Church we must understand not the whole Universal Church, but either that part of it which is really holy in this World, or that Church which shall be hereafter, when the corrupt Members shall be utterly cut off. Neither is this to make too Churches, but only to assign two different states of the same Church.

This being premis'd, I shall prove these three Propositions;

1. *That an external Profession of the Christian Faith is enough to qualify a Person to be admitted a Member of Christ's Church.*

2. *That every such Member has a right to all the external privileges of the Church, till by the just censure of the Church he be excluded from those privileges.*

3. *That some corrupt Members remaining in the Church is no just cause of a Separation from her.*

First then, an external Profession of the Christian Faith (made either by himself or by his Sureties) is enough to qualify a Person to be admitted a Member of Christ's Church. For, 1. This is the qua-

lification prescrib'd by our Lord, *Go teach all Nations*, that is, make Disciples of all Nations, *Baptizing them*, &c. *Matth.* 28. 19. Now the Pastors of the Church cannot know the sincerity of Mens Hearts, but their Profession of Christianity entitles them to Baptism. By this Rule the Apostles acted whilst Christ was upon Earth, and Baptiz'd more than were sincere; for of so many Persons that were Baptiz'd, not above one hundred and twenty continu'd with Christ to the last. 2. By the same Rule they acted afterwards; for St. Peter Baptiz'd about three Thousand in one day upon their professing the Word, *Acts* 2. 41. tho' all wou'd not probably prove sincere; and two of them, *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, were gross Hypocrites. St. Philip, *Acts* 8. 12. Baptiz'd both Men and Women at *Samaritania*, and amongst them was *Simon Magus*; whom the holy Deacon might justly suspect for his former practises, and whose Hypocrisie appear'd afterwards. Such other Members of the Church were *Demas*, *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, whose bare Profession Entitled them to that privilege. 3. Christ foretels (a) that his Church shou'd consist of Good and Bad, by comparing it to a Field of Wheat and Tares, a Net of all sorts of Fishes, a Floor of Corn and Chaff, &c. St. Paul saies, (b) *they are not all Israel, that are of Israel*; and Christ saies, *that many are call'd, but few chosen*. 4. The many corrupt Members (c) of the Churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*, and the seven Churches in *Asia*, prove the same. For if the Apostles themselves admitted mere formal Professors, we may conclude, that they thought it God's Will, that it

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(a) *Matth.* 3. 12. and 13. 24, &c. *Joh.* 15. 1. (b) *Rom.* 9. 6.  
 (c) *1 Cor.* 11. 20, 21. *2 Cor.* 12. 20, 21. *1 Cor.* 6. *Gal.* 3. *Rev.* 3.  
 shou'd

shou'd be so. 5. No other Rule in admitting Persons into the Church is practicable ; since the Officers of Christ cannot make a certain judgment of Men, because they themselves have short and fallible understandings.

*Secondly, Therefore, every such Member has a right to all the External privileges of the Church, till by the just censure of the Church he be excluded from those privileges.* By External privileges, I mean only a Communion with the Church in the Word and Ordinances ; for the pardon of Sin, and comforts of the Holy Ghost, &c. are Internal privileges, which belong to none but the truly Good, who are born not of Water only, but of the Spirit, Now when a Man by gross and notorious wickedness has forfeited the Internal privileges of the Church, he ought by the censures of the Church to be excluded from the External privileges also : but till the sentence of the Church is past upon him, we must not forsake the Church our selves to avoid Communion with him ; because, till then, his right to them remains inviolable, and that for several reasons.

1. Because the Baptismal Covenant gives Men a right to God's Promises, as far as they perform the conditions. If a bare federal holiness gives Men a relation to God, then it gives them a Title to the Blessings that belong to that relation. Not that unworthy Men shall receive the special reward of the truly Good ; but they are to be allow'd the liberty to partake of those External Blessings, which he in common bestows upon the whole Family.

2. Church Membership necessarily implies Church Communion, or else it signifies nothing. For to what purpose is a Man a Member of

a Society, if he cannot enjoy the privileges of it?

3. All the *Jews* were commanded to join in the public Worship, tho' I doubt many of them were wicked Livers; and therefore mere Circumcision was enough to put a Man into a capacity of Communicating with the *Jewish* Church in its most Solemn and Sacred Ordinances.

4. It appears, that St. *Paul* makes the Number of those that receive the Lord's Supper, to be as great, as that of those that were Baptiz'd. For they were all *made to drink into one Spirit*, 1 Cor. 12. 13. that is, in the Cup of the blessed Sacrament, and *all are partakers of one Bread*, 10. 17. and we read that *they*, all the 3000, *Ananias* and *Sapphira* being of the number, *continu'd in the Apostles Doctrin, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayer*, Acts 2. 42.

5. Church Membership is in order to the Edification and Salvation of Mens Souls; and this cannot be attain'd without being admitted to all the Acts and Offices of Church Communion. For it is of mighty advantage to us to hear God's Word duly preach'd, to have our Prayers join'd with those of other Christians, and our grace strengthen'd in the Holy Communion; and these things cannot be had, but in Church Communion. Nay, our improvement in holiness is more to be ascrib'd to the operations of the Spirit, than to the External Administrations; and therefore, (d) since God promises his Spirit to Believers, only as they are Members of his Church, and no otherwise than by the use and Ministry of his Word and Sa-

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(d) Acts 2. 47. Eph. 5. 23. and 4. 4.

craments; since his ordinary method of saving Men is by adding them to the Church; since Christ suffer'd for us as incorporated into a Church, and the operations of the Spirit are confin'd to the Church; we see the Necessity of holding actual Communion with the Church in order to Sanctification and Salvation.

But it may be said, that those who have only the Form, and not the Power of Godliness, *are guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, and eat and drink their own Damnation*, when they receive the Sacrament, 1 Cor. 11. 27, 29. and such Men cannot have a right to that, in doing which they sin so heinously. Now to this I answer, 1. that in a strict sense the very best Men are unworthy Receivers; but, 2. those Members, that we have asserted to have a right to the External Privileges of Christ's Church, are not guilty of that unworthiness which the Apostle speaks of. For we do not plead for the right of such open and scandalous Sinners, whom St. Paul charges with Schism and Divisions, Pride and Contempt of their Brethren, Sensuality and Drunkenness. Such Swine as these ought not indeed to come to the Holy Table of our Lord, because they have forfeited their right to it, and ought by the censures of the Church to be excluded.

If it be said, that those Receivers, who are destitute of saving grace, tho' they are free from scandalous Sins, are yet in an unconverted condition; and that this Sacrament is not a converting but confirming Ordinance; I answer, that taking Conversion for turning Men to the profession of Christianity, 'tis true, that none but converted or baptiz'd Persons must receive the Sacrament; but if we take Conversion for turning those who are

already Baptiz'd, to a serious practise of holiness, then this is a converting ordinance. For what more powerful motives to holiness can be found, than what the Sacrament represents to us; wherein the great love of God in Christ, and our Savior's Sufferings, and God's hatred of Sin, and the dismal consequences of it, are so lively set forth?

*Thirdly*, I proceed to shew, that *some corrupt Members remaining in the Church is no just cause of Separation from her.* And,

1. From the Example of the *Jews*. What Sins could be greater than those of *Eli's Sons*, who arriv'd to such impudence in sinning, that *they lay with the Women before the door of the Tabernacle*? Yet did not *Elkanah* and *Hannah* refrain to come up to *Shilo*, and to join with them in public worship. Nay, they are said to *transgress*, who refus'd to come, tho' they refus'd out of abhorrence of the wickedness of those Men, 1 Sam. 2. 17, 24. In *Ahab's* time, when almost all *Israel* were Idolaters, and *bated betwixt God and Baal*; yet then did the Prophet *Elijah* Summon all *Israel* to appear on Mount *Carmel*, and hold a Religious Communion with them in Preaching and Praying, and offering a miraculous Sacrifice. Neither did the Seven Thousand that had kept themselves upright, and not bowed their Knees to *Baal*, absent themselves because of the Idolatry of the rest; but they all came and join'd in that public Worship perform'd by the Prophet, 1 Kings 18. 39. and 19. 18. In the *Old Testament*, when both Prince and Priests and People were very much deprav'd and debauch'd in their Manners, we do not find that the Prophets at any time exhorted the faithful and sincere to separate, or that they themselves set

set up any separate Meetings, but continu'd in Communion with the Church, Preaching to them, and exhorting them to Repentance.

2. From the Example of *Christians*. Many Members of the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*, and the seven Churches in *Asia*, were grown very scandalous; yet we do not read that good Men separated from the Church, or that the Apostles commanded them so to do.

3. From our Savior's own Example, who did not separate from the *Jewish* Church, tho' the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who rul'd in Ecclesiastical Matters at that time, had perverted the *Law*, corrupted the *Worship* of God, were blind Guides and Hypocrites, devoured Widows Houses, and had only a form of Godliness, Matth. 15. 6, 7, 8. How careful was he, both by his Example and Precept, to forbid and discountenance a Separation upon that account? *They sit in Moses's Seat*, saies he; *all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do*; Matth. 23. 2, 3.

4. From the Apostle's exprefs command to hold Communion with the Church of *Corinth*, notwithstanding the many great immoralities that were amongst the Members of it. (e) *There were Schisms and Contentions amongst them, Strife and Envyings, Fornication and Incest, eating at the Idols Table, and coming not so soberly as became them to the Table of our Lord*; yet do's the Apostle not only not command them to separate, but approve their meeting together, and exhort them to continue it.

But (f) *let a Man examin himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. In*

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(e) 1 Cor. 1. 12, 13. and 3. 3. and 5. 1. and 11. 18. (f) 1 Cor. 11. 28.



these words the Apostle plainly solves the Case I am discoursing on, and shews, what private Christians, in whose power it is not judicially to correct Vice, are to do, when they see so many wicked Men intruding to the Lord's Supper; viz. not to abstain from it, but by Preparation and Examination of themselves to take care that they be not of their number. If to separate had been the way, the Apostle would then have discoursed after this manner; There are many Schisms and Strifes in the Church, there is an incestuous Person not cast out, many proud despisers of their Brethren, Men of strange Opinions, of untam'd Appetites, and unbridled Passions, and therefore I advise you not to come amongst them, nor to partake of the Holy Sacrament with them, lest you be infected with their Sores, and partake of their Punishments. But by advising them to examin themselves, and then to come, he plainly intimates, that 'twas their Duty to continue in the Communion of the Church notwithstanding these; as if he had said, I do not mention the foul Enormities of some that come to this holy Feast, to discourage you from coming, lest you shou'd be polluted by their Sins: but to excite you to strict Examination of your selves, that you be not polluted by any sinful Acts and Compliances of your own; and then there's no danger of being defil'd by theirs.

5. From the Nature of Church Communion, I have already prov'd in the *First* Chapter, that every act of Church Communion, is an act of Communion with the whole Christian Church, and all the Members of it, whether present or absent; and therefore those who separate from a  
National

National Church for the sake of corrupt Professors, are Schismatics in doing so; and all their Prayers and Sacraments are not acts of Communion, but a Schismatical Combination. Because, tho' they cou'd form a Society as pure and holy as they desire, yet they confine their Communion to their own select Company, and exclude the whole Body of Christians, all the World over, out of it. Their Communion is no larger, than their gather'd Church; for if it be, then they must still Communicate with those Churches, which have corrupt Members, as all visible Churches on Earth have.

'Tis true, good Men must frequently exhort and advise corrupt and scandalous Members; they must reprove them with prudence, affection and calmness; they must bewail their Sins, and pray to God for their Reformation; they must as much, and as conveniently as may be, avoid their company, especially all familiarity with them; and if repeated Admonitions, either private or before one or two more, will not do; then they must tell the Church, that by its more public reproofs, the scandalous Members may be reclaim'd, or by its just censures cut off from the Communion. These things the *Holy Scriptures* command us to do, and the Primitive Christians practis'd accordingly. But if after all the endeavors of private Christians, some scandalous Members, thro' the defect of Discipline, shou'd remain in the Church; they cannot injure those Persons that are no way accessary to their Sin. For no Sin pollutes a Man, but that which is chosen by him. *Noah* and *Lot* were good, even amongst the wicked; nor did *Judas* defile our Savior and his Apostles at the Passover. The good and bad Communicate

together (not in Sin, but) in their common Duty. To Communicate in a Sin, is Sin : but to Communicate with a Sinner, in that which is not sinful, cannot be a Sin.

'Tis true, the Apostle saies, *1 Cor. 5. 6. A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump*; but this is a Proverbial Speech, and shews only that Sin, like leaven, is of a very spreading Nature. The People are as a lump, and a wicked Person is as leaven amongst them: but, tho' the leaven is apt to convey it self thro' the whole lump, yet only those parts are actually leaven'd with it, that take the leaven; and so, tho' the Sinner by bad example is apt to infect others, yet those only are actually infected, who Communicate with him in Sin. *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, saies our Savior, *Matt. 16. 6.* He do's not advise his Disciples to leave their Assemblies, but to beware that they take no leaven of them. The incestuous Person was not cast out of the Church of *Corinth*; and yet the Apostle saies, at least of some of them, *ye are unleavened, 1 Cor. 5. 7.* And why may not the joint Prayers of the Church, and the examples of good Men, be as sovereign an antidote against the infection; as the bare company of wicked Men is of power to convey it? Especially considering that the Sins of the wicked shall never be imputed to the righteous: but the Prayers of the righteous have obtain'd pardon for the wicked.

If it be said, that the pollutions of Sin, were typify'd by the legal uncleannesses, and that every thing that the unclean Person touch'd, was made unclean; I answer, that those legal pollutions did not defile the whole Communion, but only those whom the unclean Person touch'd. For 1. There was no Sacrifice appointed for any such pollution,

as came upon all for the Sin for some few. 2. Tho' the Prophets reprov'd the Priests for not separating *the clean from the unclean*, Ezek. 22. 26. yet they never taught, that the whole Communion was polluted, because the unclean came into the Congregation thro' the neglect of the Priests Duty. As those that touch'd the unclean Person, were unclean : so those that have Fellowship with the wicked in their Sins, are polluted. 3. When 'tis said, that the unclean Person, that did not purify himself, *defil'd the Tabernacle, and polluted the Sanctuary*; Numb. 19. 13, 20. the meaning is, that he did so to himself, but not to others; so do's a wicked Man the Ordinances of God, in respect of himself, but not of others. The Prayers of the wicked, tho' join'd with those of the Church, are an abomination unto God; whilst at the same time the Prayers of good Men go up as a Sweet-smelling Savor, and are accepted by him. The Person that comes unworthily to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, eats and drinks Judgment to himself : but that hinders not; but that those who at the same time come better prepar'd, may do it to their own Eternal Comfort and Salvation. *To the pure all things are pure : but to them that are defil'd and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their Mind and Conscience is defil'd*, Tit. 1. 15.

I grant indeed, that the Apostle saies, 2 Cor. 6. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing* : but this makes nothing against my Assertion, if we consider, 1. the occasion of this Exhortation. For the Christian *Corinthians* liv'd in the midst of Heathens, by whom they were often invited to their Idol Feasts, at which some of them did not scruple to eat things Sacrificed to Idols : but the  
Apostle

Apostle persuades them not to go, not only upon the account of scandal to their weak Brethren, whose ignorance might suffer them to be drawn by their Example to go and eat at them, even in honor to the Idol; but also, because 'twas plain Idolatry so to do. For as we receive the Lord's Supper in honor of *Christ*: so they must be thought to eat in honor to the Idol; because the Sacrifice was offer'd to the Idol. But blessed be God, we live in a Christian Country, wherein there are no Idol Feast at all. 2. That the Persons, from whom they were to separate, were no better than *Unbelievers* and *Idolaters*. But now, because Christians by the Apostle's command were to separate from the Assemblies of *Heathen* Idolaters, do's it therefore follow that they must separate from the Assemblies of *Christians*, because some, who while they profess *Christ*, do not live like *Christians*; are present at them? Is there no difference between a *Pagan* or an *Infidel*, that denies *Christ* and worships Devils; and an immoral *Christian*, who outwardly owns *Christ*, and worships the true God? 3. That the unclean thing they were not to touch, was the abominable practices us'd by the Heathens in the Worship of their Gods. But now, because Christians are not to Communicate with Heathens in their filthy Mysteries, nor to partake with any sort of wicked Men in any Action that's Immoral; do's it therefore follow, that they must not do their Duty, because sometimes it cannot be done but in their Company? Must they abstain from the public Worship of God and the Lord's Table, to which they are commanded; because Evil Men, who till they repent, have nothing to do there, rudely intrude themselves?

As for *St. John's* words, *Revel. 18. 4. Come out of her, my People, that ye be not partakers of her Sins; and that ye receive not of her Plagues*; they are a command to all Christians to forsake the Communion of *Idolaters*; and according to most Interpreters, those in particular of the Church of *Rome*: but the Text do's not afford the *Dissenters* the least Plea to separate from us, who are Reform'd from *Popery*, and retain nothing of it, but what it retains of the Gospel and the Primitive Church.

I have nothing now to add, but that the eminent *Dissenters* do utterly (g) disclaim this Plea of *Mixt Communion*. *Mr. Vines* saies it is *Donastical*; and others, as *Mr. Brinsly* and *Mr. Jenkin*, that it's the common Plea or Pretence, which for the most part hath been taken up by all *Schismatics*, in defence of their Separation from the Church; and therefore that it is necessary the People should be untaught it, as *Mr. Baxter* advises. And as they do disclaim it, so they declare that those who separate upon this account, do it very unjustly; that the Scandals of Professors are ground of Mourning, but not of Separation; that there may be a sufficient cause to cast out obstinate Sinners, and yet not sufficient cause for one to leave the Church, tho' such be not cast out; that the suffering of profane and scandalous Livers to continue in the Church, and partake in the Sacrament, is doubtless a great Sin; yet the Godly are not presently to separate from it. There is, saies *Mr. Burroughs*, an error on both sides; either those

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(g) See *Vines* on the Sacrament, p. 235, 242. Platform. c. 14. §. 8. *Brinsly's* Arraigm. p. 37, 38: *Jenkin* on *Jude*, v. 19. *Baily's* Dissuasive, p. 22. *Sacril. desert.* p. 98. *Cawdrey's* Reformation promoted, p. 131. *Manton* on *Jude*, p. 496. *Cotton's* Holiness of Church Members, p. 2. *Burrough's* Gospel Worship, Sermon. 11. p. 242.

that think it concerns them not at all with whom they come to the Sacrament ; or those that if they do what they can to keep the Scandalous away, and yet they shou'd be suffer'd to come, think that they themselves may not come to partake of it. This both the Presbyterians and Independents agree in, and indeavor (b) to prove by several Arguments.

Nay, they answer an objection drawn from 1 Cor. 5. 11. *If any Man that is call'd a Brother, be a Fornicator, &c. with such an one no not to eat ; and tell us, First, That if it be meant of excluding such an one from Church Communion, 'it must be done by the Church, and not by a private Person. But you are not commanded to separate from the Church, if they exclude him not. So Mr. Baxter, &c. Secondly, That it concerns not Religious, but Civil Communion ; and that not all Civil Society or Commerce, but familiar only. For which they produce several Reasons ; 1. They argue from the Notion of eating Bread, which is a Token of Love and Friendship in the phrase of Scripture ; not to partake of, or to be shut from the Table, is a sign of Familiarity broken off. So Mr. Ball, &c. 2. The eating which is here forbidden, is allow'd to be with the Heathen : but it's the civil eating which is only allow'd to*

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(b) See *Vines* on the Sacrament, p. 31. 32, 44, 242, 246. *Vindicat. of Pres. Gov.* p. 134. *Brinsly's Arraignment.* p. 47. *Firmin's Separ. Exam.* p. 40. *Cawdrey's Church Reformation.* p. 71. *Tombs's Theod.* p. 74. *Hooker's Survey*, Pref. A. 3. Platform, c. 14. §. 8, 9. *Grave Confut.* part 3. p. 53, 55. *Burrough's Gospel worth.* Serm. 11. p. 236, 237. *Ball's Tryal*, c. 10. p. 191, 250, 211. *Fean's Discourse on the Lord's Supper.* *Rutherford's Right of Presbyt.* *Blake's Vindic.* p. 235. *Cotton's Inf. Eap.* p. 102. *Carterwright on Proverb.* *Edwards's Apol.* *Baxter's Christian Direct.* p. 707. *Non-Conformists no Schismatics*, p. 16. *Bains on the Ephes.* c. 1. v. 1. p. 5.

be with an Heathen; therefore it's the civil eating which is forbidden to be with a Brother. So Mr Jenkin, &c. (i) And as for other Objections, Mr. Baxter's Answer is sufficient; If you mark all the Texts in the Gospel, you shall find that all the Separation which is commanded in such cases (besides our Separation from the Infidel and Idolatrous World, or Antichristian and Heretical Confederacies and Churches) is but one of these two sorts; 1. Either that the Church cast out the impenitent by the Power of the Keys; or, 2. That private Men avoid all private Familiarity with them; but that the private Members shou'd separate from the Church, because such Persons are not cast out of it, shew me one Text to prove it if you can.

To conclude, this objection of Mixt Communion proves nothing but a supercilious Arrogance, and a great want of Charity in those that make it. What care they may take in their new way of Discipline, I cannot tell; but our Church has given the Minister a power of Rejecting scandalous Sinners, (k) and this is as much as can be done; for the close Hypocrite will escape the narrowest search. Every Man is charg'd to *examin himself*, and not

(i) See Baxter's Defence, part 2. p. 27. Ball's Tryal. p. 200. Jenkin on Jude, v. 19. Cawdrey's Church Reformat. p. 75, 122, 126. Brinsly's Arraignment, p. 40, 45, 48. Tombes's Theodul. p. 128, 167, 210. Grave Confut. part 1. p. 17, 18. & part 4. p. 57. Vines on the Sacrament, p. 219, 226, 233, 246. Cartwright's Def. of the Admon. p. 98, 99, 106. Goodwin on the Epheſ. p. 487, 488. Blake's Vindic. c. 31. p. 236, 238. Gillisp. Nihil respondet, p. 33. Knutton's Queries. Throughton's Apol. p. 65. Baxter's Cure, Dir. 47. p. 231. Owen's Evangel. Love, c. 3. p. 77. Brian's Dwelling with God, Sermon 6. p. 301. Firmin's Separat. Exam. p. 28. Collins's Provocator Provocatus, p. 144, 151. England's Remembrancer, Sermon 16. p. 454, (k) See Rubr. before the Communion.



another; and 'twould be well, if all would do so. For he that inquires seriously into his own Sins, will find great cause to be humble and penitent; but he that is curious to pry into the Miscarriages of others, will be apt to be vain, proud, self-conceited, and censorious; which will make him as unfit for the Table of the Lord, as any of those Faults which he so scornfully condemns in his Neighbors, that he esteems himself and the Ordinances of God polluted by their Company.

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## C H A P. X.

### *The Pretenses of Purer Ordinances and Better Edification among the Dissenters, Answer'd.*

**W**ELL; but tho' our Communion be not sinful, yet they can find Purer Ordinances and Better Edification amongst the *Dissenters*; therefore they may lawfully separate from the Church of *England*.

But, *First*, What Purer Ordinances wou'd Men have, than those of our Savior's own Institution, without any corrupt and sinful mixtures to spoil their Virtue and Efficacy? The Purity of Divine Administrations must consist in their agreement with the Institution, that there is not any such defect or addition as alters their nature and destroys their Virtue: but he who thinks that the Sacraments lose their Efficacy, unless they be administered in that way which he likes best, is guilty of gross Superstition; and attributes the Virtue of Sacraments to the manner of their Administration, not to their Divine Institution.

*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, The pretense of better Edification will by no means justify Separation. For this Edification must be understood, either of the whole Church, or of particular Christians. Now Edification is building up, and is apply'd to the whole Church, consider'd as God's House and Temple. This is the true Scripture Notion of it, as appears by many Texts, *1 Cor.* 3. 9, 10. and 8. 1. and 14. 5, 12. *Eph.* 2. 21. and 4. 12, 13, 15, 16. *Matth.* 21. 42. *Acts* 4. 11. *2 Cor.* 10. 8, 12, 16. and 13. 10. Now it's an odd way of building up the Temple of God by dividing and separating the parts of it from each other. As for the Edification of particular Persons, which is also spoken of in Scripture, *1 Thess.* 5. 11. it is therefore call'd Edification, because it is an improvement of a Man's Spiritual Condition; and it is wrought in the Unity of the Church, and makes particular Christians one Spiritual House and Temple, by a firm close Union and Communion of all the parts of the Church; so that every Christian is Edify'd, as he grows up in all Christian Graces and Virtues in the Unity of the Church. And indeed, if our growth in Grace be more owing to the assistance of God's Spirit, than to the external Administrations, as *St. Paul* tells us, *1 Cor.* 3. 6, 7. and if the Spirit confines his influences to the Unity of the Church, there being but *one Body and one Spirit*, *Eph.* 4. 4. then it do's not seem a very likely way for Edification, to cut our selves off from the Unity of *Christ's Body*. *St. Jude*, v. 19. seems to tell us, that true Edification was a stranger to those who separated from the common building: but *those who kept to the Communion of the Church, built up themselves in their most Holy Faith, and Pray'd in the Holy Ghost*; and a Man may with greater assurance expect the Blessing of God, if he

continue in the Church, than if he separate.

But I shall examin this pretense at large; and shew, that it is unlawful for any particular Christian to separate from the *Church of England*, because he thinks he can Edify better amongst the *Dissenters*. This I shall prove by *Four Arguments*.

I. Because better Edification cannot be had in separate Meetings, than in our Churches; as will appear, if we consider, *First*, how fit our constitution is to Edify Mens Souls; *Secondly*, that this constitution is well manag'd for Edification.

*First* then, That our constitution is fit to Edify Souls, will appear, if we consider *Four things*.

1. Our Creeds contain all Fundamental Articles of Faith, that are necessary to Salvation; but we have no nice and obscure matters in them. We believe all that the early Christians in the first *Three Hundred* years thought needful; that is, all that *Christ* and his Apostles taught: and this Faith will sufficiently and effectually Edify the Souls of Men.
2. The necessity the Church laies upon a good Life and Works. The Articles of her Creed, when firmly believ'd, do plainly tend to make Men good. She declares, that without preparatory Virtues the most zealous devotion is not pleasing to God; and that it is but show, unless obedience follow. Such a Faith she laies down as Fundamental to Salvation, as produces excellent Virtues; and determins, that *without Faith and Good Works no Man shall see God*. Her Festivals commemorate the Virtues and recommend the Examples of Excellent Men. Her Ceremonies are decent; her Prayers are for Holiness; her Discipline is to force, and her Homilies to persuade Men to that Piety, which her whole constitution aims at. She tels Sinners plainly, that unless they repent, they

they must perish; and saies that plain Virtues are the Ornament and Soul of our Faith. And certainly the Civil interest of a Nation is Edify'd by such a Church, as teaches Men to perform the duties of their severall relations so exactly. 3. She is fitly constituted to excite true devotion; because she gives us true Notions of God and our selves, by describing his attributes and our wants. Her Prayers are grave and of a due length; and she has proper Prayers for most particular occasions. She has Offices to quicken our affections, and confirm our Obedience. The Offices of the Lord's Supper, Baptism and Burial, are extremely good in their kind. Bring but an honest mind and good affections to all these parts of Devotion, and they will make the Church a Choire of Angels. 4. Her Order and Discipline are such, that she makes Religion neither slovenly, nor too gay. Wise and good Men have judg'd all her Ceremonies to be decent and useful; and they are of great Antiquity, and fit to make our Services comely. And truly, whilst we have Bodies, these outward helps are very convenient, if not necessary. Her Government is so well temper'd, that her Members may not be dissolute, nor her Rulers insolent. And if all Vices are not chastiz'd, the reason is, because unnecessary divisions have stopp'd her Discipline upon offenders. Her Government is Apostolical, Primitive and Universal. None of her Parts or Offices give just cause for any to revolt from her; but considering all things, she is the best constituted Church in the World. If therefore (a) Edification be *going on to perfection*, or

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(a) Heb. 6. 1. 2 Pet. 3. 18. Rom. 15. 2. 1 Cor. 14. 3.

growing in grace; if it is doing good to the Souls of Men; if it be to make plain the great things in Religion to the understandings of Men; then it is to be found in this Church.

Secondly, That our Constitution is well manag'd for Edification, will appear if we consider, 1. That Pastors are not left to their liberty, but strictly commanded under great Temporal Penalties to direct their Flocks, to preserve Faith and a good Conscience with substantial Devotion, which will to the purpose Edify Mens Souls, and effectually save them. 2. That these commands are obey'd by our Pastors. For this we appeal to good and wise Men in our Communion, who have honesty and judgment enough to confess that they have found it true; and to say that they are prejudiced, and want sincerity and knowledge to pass a judgment, is uncharitable. Our Protestant Neighbors have commended our Government, condemn'd the Separation, magnify'd our Pastors, and wish'd they were under such a Discipline, and translated many of our Mens Works to Edify their People. Dissenters themselves own our Sermons to be really good. And tho' some few may not be able to answer the true design of Preaching, yet in general Men may Edify very well among us. Nor has there been for these many hundred Years a Clergy so Learned, Pious, Prudent and industrious to Edify Mens Souls, as now is in the English Church.

II. Because those who make this pretense, do commonly mistake better Edification. And surely, to desert the plain and great duty of Church-Communion for disputable or mistaken Edification, is to be guilty of the sin of Schism. Now the mistakes of these Men are principally three.

1. In

1. In taking nice notions for Edifying truths. He that Discourses about Angels, separated Souls, the situation of Paradise and Hell, &c. shall be thought a sounder Divine, than he that teaches the way of Salvation plainly, by Faith and good Conversation. Such things pass with too many for saving Truths; and many ignorant and corrupt Men, that espouse Parties and Interests, readily embrace them. The Apostle speaks of some that have *itching Ears*, 2 Tim. 4. 3. If the food, tho' wholesome and good, be not to their fancy, they complain of starving. Bring but an honest, sincere and teachable mind, and you may Edify in a worse Church than ours; but otherwise the best doctrine will be Insipid to you. Place Edification in the substantial things of Religion, in a right Faith and a holy Conversation, which our Church presses upon us under the penalty of eternal damnation; for these things alone do truly Edify the Souls of Men, and to these all Religion tends. The Kingdom of Christ consists in *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. 14. 17. Now such a Religion as this being so strongly injoin'd and zealously taught in our Church, we need not complain for want of Edification; and the desire of other nourishment is *spiritual Pride and Wantonness*. Wherefore desire the *sincere milk of the Word* (the food of your understanding, and not of your fancy) *that ye may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. 2. 2. For if you had but such an increase of grace, as to *hear meekly God's Word and to receive it with pure affection*, you could not easily fail to *bring forth the fruits of the Spirit*. Therefore 'tis dangerous and sinful to give Men a Liberty to run from any establish'd Church for better Edification, which is so often and easily

mistaken. And may we not add, that when a quarrel arises from an unjust denial of the Minister's Dues, then he is call'd dull, and a better must be sought elsewhere? Thus one fault helps out another, and defamation must excuse the Schism.

2. In taking the Opinions of Parties for essential Truths. This those Men do, that are wedded to a Party; and if we do not Explain all things in their way, they cry, we destroy the Gospel truths, and that instead of being Edify'd they are weakn'd in their faith. The early and best Christians thought it sufficient to know *Jesus and the Resurrection* in their full extent; and it were well if Men were satisfy'd with this old way; otherwise they break the Peace of the Church and Obedience to Governors, which are the great things of Religion, upon the score of better Edification.

3. In taking sudden heats and warmth, arising from melting tones and other arts, for Edification; whereas a bright or a lowring day, or a Dose of Physic can do the same things; and they have often happen'd in the worst of Men. According as these Heats and Bodily Passions are Stirr'd, so in some Mens Opinion the Ministry is Edifying or Unprofitable. But sound and solid Reasoning is the true way to Edification; whereas the Silly and Weak, who are most subject to these Heats and Colds, are Inconstant, and turn round in all Religions. Such Persons being all fail, are the more easily tost about with every wind of Doctrine.

III. Because the pretense of Better Edification will cause endless divisions in the Church. For since every Man must judge, and the Governor

vernor must not restrain him, therefore People may run from Teacher to Teacher to find out Better Edification, *Ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth*, 2 Tim. 3. 7.

And when once they have torn the Unity of the Church in pieces, then envy, detraction, strife, murmurings, fierceness, and numberless other mischiefs will come in; and that which divided them from the Church, will crumble them into Endless Parties, to the joy of our Enemies. But all this wou'd be avoided, if Men were sensible of the heinous nature of Schism, which the Apostles and all the ancient Christians have painted forth in the blackest colours.

IV. Because this is a discouragement to an honest and truly Christian Ministry. For if the Flock run from a Pastor, that instructs them rightly, upon pretense of better Edification; will it not cool his zeal, check his labors, and affront his Person and Office? And this may be done to the best Pastors, as well as to others; and the most judicious *Dissenters* have complain'd of it: tho' upon this principle it cannot be remedy'd, because the People must judge for themselves. And ought the Ministers to be scorn'd and discountenanc'd, and have their Ministry rendred useles, for the fancies, peevishness and humor of the People? If it be said, that the Pastor is idle or unsound in Doctrin; I answer, that our Governors, upon a just and modest complaint, will quicken the lazy and negligent, and correct the Heretical Pastor, and restore the Flock to true Edification.

I may add, that the Eminent *Dissenters* do declare, that the pretense of *Better Edification* is not a sufficient excuse for Separation, as those who have leisure may find in those Books of theirs



theirs which I have quoted (*b*) at the bottom.

But after all that has been said, I know some Persons will object, that our Ministers are unedifying Preachers, for they cannot profit by their Sermons. Therefore I shall endeavor to give these Men full satisfaction; and I doubt not to demonstrate, that they may profit by our Sermons, if it be not their own fault.

We are all agreed, that the *Scriptures* contain all things necessary to Salvation; and therefore when they are rightly open'd and duly apply'd in a Sermon, so that the hearers improve in Christian Knowledge, or in Faith, or in well-doing, then they profit by that Sermon. Now if any Man do not improve in these by the help of our Sermons, the fault must be, either in the Matter of the Sermon, or in the manner of it.

And as for the former of these, I can scarce think, that any *Dissenter* will except against our Sermons upon that account; they being taken out of the *Scriptures*, which were never better open'd and apply'd, than in our Sermons. I am sure, all heavenly Truths are faithfully declar'd in them. Matters of Controversy are rarely handled in our Pulpits; for the drift of our Preachers is to make

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(*b*) See *Hildersb.* Lect. 28. 29, 54, 58, 66. *Methermeneur.* p. 71, 72, 74. *Baxter's Cure*, p. 359. *his* Defense, part 1. p. 85. *his* Farewell-Sermon. Continuat. of Morn. Exer. Sermon. 4. *Jenkin* on *Jude*, v. 19. *England's Remembrancer*, Sermon. 16. *Burroughs's* *Irenic.* c. 12, 23. Platform, Pref. p. 7. & c. 13. *Ball's* Tryal, c. 4. *Brinsley's* Arraignment, p. 48. *Cawdry's* *Independ.* a Schism, p. 50. *Vines* on the Sacrament, p. 246. *Tuckney's* Sermon. on *Acts* 9. 31. *Jas* Div. Min. Evangel. p. 11, 12. Letter of the Minist. in *Old-Engl.* to the Brethren in *New-Engl.* p. 13. *Nye's* Case of great use, p. 3, 25. *Tombs's* Theodul. c. 9. §. 8.

the People good. They resolve Cases of Conscience, and press the motives to believe, and the arguments to convince Men of their Duty. They condemn all Vices, recommend all Virtues, and apply the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel. And if Men cannot profit where such things are constantly well manag'd ; I am sure the fault do's not lie in the matter of the Sermons, but somewhere else.

If some say, that the Matter is good, but the manner is such, that they cannot reap the like benefit by them, as by the *Non-Conformists* Preaching ; I answer, that the fault must then lie, either in the *Composition* or the *Delivery*. *First*, as to the *Composition*, I am confident, that never did Men more endeavor after clear method and plain Language, than our Preachers do now. If it be objected, that they do not keep the old method of *Doctrin*, *Reason* and *Use* ; I answer, that they alwaies chuse it, when it is natural : but the ancient Doctors never observ'd any constant Rule ; and yet the People profited much more, than they do now. *Secondly*, as to the *Delivery*, if it be objected that our Preachers are not *vehement* enough ; I answer, that they are, when the matter requires it ; but *vehemence* loses its effect, if it be spent upon all things alike. *Vehemence* do's not consist in the strength of voice, nor yet in that heat of temper, which makes some Men speak earnestly, when they are not so deeply affected, as some of cooler tempers are. Sedate Men may instruct and move by the help of serious consideration ; and those affections that are rais'd without it, are little worth. But neither all your Men, nor all ours, have the same voice or the same temper ; and therefore this can be no more hindrance

to Edification among us, than among you. If *reading of Sermons* be objected, I answer, that some of our Preachers use no notes in the Pulpit, others read but little; and if a Man will but turn his head another way, and not look upon the Preacher, a Sermon that is read altogether, will sound as well, as if it were pronounc'd without book. If *Reading* make a thing unprofitable; the *Bible*, when 'tis read, must be unprofitable; and it must be got without book to make it Edifying. Besides, some famous Preachers of your own read every word; and therefore you may profit by ours as well as by them.

But I fear, that when Men complain they cannot profit by our Sermons, they mean nothing, but that our Preachers do not move their affections, as the *Non-conformists* do. To this I cou'd say much, but it will be sufficient to mention only three things. 1. Your Men and ours have several Talents, some for informing the judgment, others for moving the affections, and others for both. All your Men do not move you alike; and yet you make such account of all, that you think it a very disorderly thing for the People to run from their own to another Minister (tho' of the same way) merely to have the Affections more mov'd. Because, 2. It is far from profiting by Sermons, to be tickl'd for a while and never to grow the better for them. 3. The chief thing is this, that affections rais'd merely by the earnestness of the Preacher, are nothing comparable to those, which we raise by consideration and reflexion upon what we have heard. And these affections our Sermons will certainly raise, if you will take a little pains with your selves, and lay them close to your Consciences.

Now

Now since our Sermons cannot be blam'd; I pray, consider where the fault must lie, if you cannot profit by them. I beseech you, in the fear of God, by whose Word we must one day be all judg'd, to consider impartially, and ask your Consciences such *Questions* as these. 1. Had you not some prejudice against the Minister you came to hear, either for his *Conformity*, or his strictness in it, and the like? If you had; such prejudices bar the heart so strongly against the most excellent instructions, that a Man will not profit by them. 2. Did you not come to Church but once or twice, and then conclude too hastily, that there was no good to be gotten there? and were you not willing to have this excuse for absenting your self wholly from it? Had you attended much, perhaps you had never left it. Try again for some time; and when you are acquainted with your Minister's method and stile and way of reasoning, his Sermons may be clear, easy and awakening to you. The *Scriptures* themselves are obscure to the best of us, till we are acquainted with them; and if they had been treated, as our Sermons are (I mean, rejected, because they are not presently understood) they had been thrown away long since as unprofitable. 3. Did you not leave the Church, because, when you came, the Minister happen'd to Treat of a Subject cross to your opinion? Hasty persons sling away from those that contradict them; but had you had patience, you might have been profited and convinced by such Discourses. 4. Was not the Minister; when you chanc'd to go to Church, treating of some distastful Subject, which you love not to hear of? Was it not *Schism*, or *Disobedience to Governors*? It is certain there are such  
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sins, which are very dangerous ; and he ought to Treat of them some time or other ; and if he Preach of *Unity* and *Obedience*, may not you profit by it ?

I doubt you have heard some of your own Ministers speak harder words of *Conformity* and *Conformists*, than you wou'd have had them, and you fancy you can profit even by those Sermons ; why then shou'd you leave our Ministers, because they press some duties more strictly than you like ? Do not many of your own way complain of their *unprofitableness* under your own Ministers, which arises, perhaps from a natural dulness ? And will not Prejudice, Passion, and Disaffection to the way of Worship, or to any Christian Doctrin, hinder *profiting* much more than natural indisposition ? So that if you complain of deadness and unprofitableness under our Ministry, it is no more than many do under your own. You shou'd not rashly conclude our Ministry to be Unedifying, but rather suspect your selves to be guilty.

Those also who fancy, that tho' they can profit something by our Ministry, yet they can profit more by others, ought to consider the same things, and ask their own consciences the same questions. Do's not this conceit arise from the foremention'd causes ? Are you not more earnestly press'd in our Congregations to be thoroughly good, than in those where you think you profit more ? This I must say, that if you do not grow more holy in all respects, you do but deceive your selves with an opinion of profiting more by the Non-Conforming Ministry, than by ours. If you wou'd attend at our Churches, you need not go any whither else for true Edification. There is

no end of seeking better Entertainment of the fancy; and the old Non Conformists thought this a dangerous principle, that *Men must go where they can profit most.* And because the opinion of a famous Man of your own may prevail with you more than ours, I'll tell you what Mr. *Hildersham* saies of *Mens leaving their own Pastors to hear others*, Lect. 58. upon *John 4.*

*First* he saies, *It is the ordinance of God that every Pastor shou'd have his own Flock to attend, and every one of God's People shou'd have a Pastor of his own to depend upon.* Now they who dwell next together, shou'd be of the same Congregation. And if thy own Pastor be a Man whose gift is approv'd by God's Church, and one who is conscionable in his place, and of unblameable life; tho' his gift be far inferior to some others, yet take heed thou leave him not at any time with contempt of his Ministry, saying, *I cannot profit by him.* For a Man may be a true Minister, tho' his gift be far inferior to many others. And you are bound to Love him and Reverence him, and thank God for him. And doubtless thou mayest profit by him, if the fault be not in thy self. Nay, there is never a Minister, that is of the most excellent gifts (if he have a godly heart) but he can truly say, he never heard any faithful Minister in his life, that was so mean, but he cou'd discern some gift in him, that was wanting in himself, and cou'd profit by him. The fruit and profit that is to be receiv'd from the Ministry, depends not only, nor chiefly, upon the gifts of the Man that Preacheth; but upon the blessing that God is pleas'd to give unto his own ordinance. And God doth oft give a greater blessing to weaker, than to stronger means. And consider, the fault may be rather in thy self than in thy Teacher, that thou canst  
not

not profit. And indeed how is it possible thou shouldst profit by his Ministry, if thou come with prejudice, without any Reverence, and delight unto it? Some follow another Pastor because of his human gifts, some only for varieties sake; some because they shew more Zeal in their voice and gesture, and phrase of speech, and manner of delivery; tho' (haply) the Doctrine it self be nothing so wholesome, as the Doctrine of their own Pastor is. But he only makes right use of the benefit of hearing such as have more excellent gifts than his own Pastor, as learns thereby to like his own Pastor the better, and to profit more by him; As they use Physic well, whose appetite is amended, and who are by it made able to relish and like their ordinary food the better. These are his words who was of such note heretofore among Non-Conformists; and how come you to differ so much from the best of your own way in former daies? The same Author speaking of the partial estimation of Ministers, saies, *this factious disposition in the bearers of God's Word hath in all Ages been the cause of much confusion in the Church of God, and greatly hindered the fruit of the Gospel of Christ, and made them incapable of profit by the word.* Lect. 66.

O that you wou'd ponder such profitable instructions! which were said on purpose to check that, which is since grown the prevailing humor. Yes, will some say, we might be persuaded to hear your Preachers constantly; but you can never justify the compelling us to it. But, saies Mr. Hildersham, Lect. 52. it is certain, that where there is a good Ministry establish'd, the Magistrate may and ought to compell all his Subjects to come and hear; notwithstanding all pretense of their Conscience to the contrary.

In short, a Sermon is then profitable, when it strengthens faith and promotes holiness; but the best Sermon in the World, tho' indited by the Spirit of God, will not profit, unless Men will attend without prejudice, passion, partiality, conceit and spiritual pride; and unless they will impartially consider those things, which are contrary to their present sense, for want of which, multitudes did not profit by our Savior's Sermons, but were rather more exasperated by them. Consider, I beseech you, whether this be not your case; and submit unto what shall appear to be reason, after you have weigh'd the matter impartially. This I hope will bring you to Church, where if you do not presently find such profit, as is promis'd, you may conclude in Mr. *Hildersham's* words, *First, either you have not sought it aright, not with earnestness, or not with a good heart: Or Secondly, if you have, and do not find it at first; yet you shall hereafter, if you seek it here with an honest heart.*

You wou'd profit more by Sermons, if you wou'd observe some Rules deliver'd by the same Author, *Leff. 26.* which now, alas! are generally neglected. One is, that at your coming into the Congregation, and during the whole time of your abode there, you wou'd behave your selves reverently. For an awful sense of God's presence wou'd be an excellent preparation to receive benefit by his Service. Another Rule is, That we must all come to the beginning of God's public Worship, and tarry till all be done. *Yea, it is the duty of God's People,* saith he, *to be in God's House before the beginning, for it becomes them to wait for the Minister of God, and not to let him wait for them.* For he shews, that Men may profit by all parts of the Service,



for (saies he) as he that is away from any part of the Sermon, shall profit the less by that which he doth here: so he that is away from any part of the Divine Service, gets the less good by that at which he is present. Nay, he saies, Lect. 28. tho' we could receive no profit by the Exercises us'd in our Assemblies, yet we must be present at them all, to do our homage unto God, and shew the Reverent Respect we have to his Ordinances. A Third Rule is, that we ought to join with the Congregation in all the parts of God's Worship. For it is comely, that all things in God's Service shou'd be done in good order, as if the whole Congregation were but one Man. And in several places he reproveth, with a great deal of zeal, Men's great carelesnes in this. A Fourth Rule is, that we ought to teach our Children and Servants to shew Reverence to the Sanctuary and public Worship of God. For God hates profanels even in Children, and contempt done by any may bring God's Curse upon all. And certainly, saies he, among other causes of the Plague, and other Judgments of God upon the Land, this is not the least, that God's public Worship is perform'd among us with so little Reverence and Devotion as it is.

But I will transcribe no more; only I shall earnestly desire two things. First, that you wou'd consider seriously, how you wou'd have lik'd what I have transcrib'd from Mr. *Hildersham*, if one of our Men had Preach'd it; especially if he added, that for the Reverence of God's public Worship, care shou'd be taken, that the place where the Congregation Assembled, may be decent and comely; and that 'tis a soul sin and contempt of God's house, to be careles about the Neatnes of it. If you wou'd have thought it unprofitable; then consider, why such things as please out of one Man's mouth, shou'd displease

displease out of another's. Is it not manifest, that partiality makes you not profit by our Sermons? Or if you cou'd not like such Discourses, either from Non-Conformists or our Ministers; then are you not mistaken about *profiting by Sermons*, when you think those discourses unprofitable, which sober Men of all sides have thought necessary? For Mr. *Hilderham* saies, *Profaness and Atheism hath made us too void of all care in Beautifying the house of God.* Secondly, If you think such a Sermon *profitable*, consider whether you have learnt so much out of *Scripture*, as to study and observe those Rules. Do you for Instance, pay Reverence to God's house, and come at the beginning of *Service*, and stand up and kneel with the Congregation, &c.? If you do not, then the fault is not in our Sermons, that you do not *profit*; for you do not profit by the *Scriptures* themselves, which plainly teach these things.

To conclude, if we have all things necessary to the building us up in our most Holy Faith, in the Communion of the Church; it will be but a poor excuse for our Dividing from it, that we hoped to be better *Edify'd*: when we had no encouragement at all to hope it, as long as we continue in the state of *Separation* upon this Pretense. For it is the Blessing of God alone, and not any Man's Skill in dispensing them, that can make the word and ordinances any way beneficial to us. With the help of his grace, those means of Instruction which we undervalue most, may be profitable to our Salvation. Without it our Ears may be tickl'd, and our Fancies pleasantly entertain'd for the time; but we cannot be truly *Edify'd* by the most fluent and popular Tongue, or the most melting and pathetical Expressions in the World.

## C H A P. XI.

*The Pretense of its being against one's Conscience to join with the Church of England, Answer'd.*

HAVING answer'd the most considerable Objections against our Communion, I am now to deal with such Persons as separate from us, tho' they have nothing to object against us; such as pretend that they are not satisfy'd in our way; that 'tis against their Conscience to join with us, or that they doubt of the lawfulness of our Communion, or at least they scruple it. But I shall shew, that these excuses are utterly insignificant; and that they cannot escape the wrath of God, who commit a sin, and think to cover it by pretending Conscience for it.

But before I enter upon these Matters, I shall lay down the Principles I mean to proceed upon, by treating distinctly on these *Five Heads*. 1. Of the *Nature of Conscience*. 2. Of the *Rule of Conscience*. 3. Of the *Power of Human Laws to oblige the Conscience*. And particularly, 4. *In the instances of Church Communion*. 5. Of the *Authority of Conscience*; or *how far a Man is obliged to be guided by it in his actions*.

I. Then, to find out the *Nature of Conscience*, let us consider what every Man doth really mean by that word, when he has occasion to use it. Now as to this, I observe, *First*; that a Man never speaks of his *Conscience*, but with respect to his own *Actions*. We do not, for instance, make at a point of Conscience, whether a thing be true

or

or false, or whether an accident be prosperous or unfortunate, or whether another Man has done well or ill. These things indeed may please or trouble us; but our *Conscience* is affected only with that, which is willingly done or left undone by us, or which we may do, or may forbear. *Secondly*, We never use the Word *Conscience* about our *actions*, but only so far as those actions are to be directed by some *Law* or *Rule*; with which if they agree, they are good, and if they disagree, they are evil. *Thirdly*, Our actions, as we concern our *Conscience* in them, are either *already done*, or *not already done*. But whether they are done or *not done*, whether *past* or *future*, they are either *commanded by God*, and so they are *Duties*; or *forbidden by God*, and so they are *Sins*; or *neither commanded nor forbidden*, and so they are *indifferent actions*. Our actions, I say, do not touch our *Conscience*, but as they fall under these considerations; and in all these respects we mean the same thing by *Conscience*.

For *First*, If the action be *not already done*, we think it either *commanded by God*, and say, we are *bound in Conscience*, or think it our *duty* to do it; or *forbidden by God*, and say, it is *against our Conscience*, or we think it *a sin* to do it; or else we think it is *indifferent*, and say, we may do it with a *safe Conscience*, that is, we believe the action may be done *without transgressing any Law of God*. This is undeniably every Man's meaning, when he talks of *Conscience* as to actions that are not yet done. *Secondly*, If we speak of our actions, that are *done and past*, saying, *my Conscience bears me witness*, or *I am satisfy'd or troubled in Conscience* for doing what I have done; we mean nothing more than this, that reflecting upon

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our own actions, we find, that we have either *done, as we are convinc'd we ought to do*, and this is a satisfaction to us; or *not done, as we ought to do*, and the remembrance of this troubles us. But in all these Cases we mean the same thing by Conscience, to wit, *our Judgment and Persuasion concerning what we ought to do, or ought not to do*. Only in the first sort, Conscience is consider'd as the guide of actions to be done; and in the second sort, as the witness of those that are already done: but in both sorts *Conscience* is the same thing, to wit, the Judgment of a Man's mind concerning the Morality of his Actions.

This is the true Notion of *Conscience* in general; but if we put Epithets to it, and talk of a good or evil Conscience, a tender Conscience, or the like, then it concludes more than I am now concern'd to give an account of.

II. I proceed to the *Rule of Conscience*. It appears by what I have said, that Conscience must alwaies have a *Rule* to follow. For, since Conscience is a Man's judgment about actions *as good, or bad, or indifferent*; it is certain, a Man must have some measure, by applying which he may judge of what sort the Action is. This Measure is the *Rule of Conscience*, and Conscience is no farther safe, than as it follows that *Rule*. Now this Measure or *Rule of Conscience* can be nothing else but the *Law of God*; because nothing can be a *Duty* or *Sin*, but what is commanded or forbidden by God's Law; and that thing only is *indifferent*, which his Law neither commands nor forbids.

Now by the Law of God, which is the *Rule of Conscience*, I mean *God's Will* for the Government of Mens actions; whether declar'd by *Nature*, or *Revelation*. By the Law of Nature I mean those Principles

Principles of Good and Evil, just and unjust, which God has written in our minds, and which every Man is *naturally* convinc'd of. Some things are eternally Good, as to *Worship God*, &c. and we know them to be our Duty; others are eternally Evil, and we know them to be Sins, by the light of Reason; and the Apostle saies, the *Gentiles* had this Law *written in their hearts*. But Christians have the Law of Revelation too contain'd in the *Scriptures*; by which God do's not make void the Law of Nature, but declares its Precepts more certainly and accurately, with greater strength, and greater rewards and punishments, than before. By this also he has perfected the Law of Nature, and obliged us to higher instances of Virtue, and added some positive Laws; as for instance, to believe in Christ, to pray to God in Christ's Name, to be Baptiz'd, and partake of the Lord's Supper.

Thus then the Natural and Reveal'd Law of God is the great *Rule of Conscience*. Only we must remember, that by the Law of Nature is to be understood, not only the chief and general heads of it, but also the necessary deductions from these heads; and by the Reveal'd Law is to be understood, not only exprest Commands and Prohibitions, but also the necessary consequences of those Commands and prohibitions. So that whatever is by *direct inference* or *parity of reason* commanded or forbidden, is a Duty or a Sin; tho' it be not commanded or forbidden in the Letter of the Law. And if it be neither commanded nor forbidden by the Letter of the Law, nor yet by inference or parity of reason; the thing is indifferent, and we may do it, or let it alone, with a safe Conscience.

III. In the third place I must consider *the power of Human Laws to oblige the Conscience*; for in a *secondary* Sense they are a part of the Rule of *Conscience*, by virtue of, and in subordination to, the *Laws of God*. This I shall explain in four Propositions.

*First*, It is most certain, that God's Law commands us to obey the Laws of Men. For all Society is founded in this principal *Law of Nature*, that we must obey our Governors in all honest and just things. Otherwise no State, City or Family can subsist happily. And 'tis most evident, that God commands us in *Scripture* to *Obey them that have the Rule over us*, and to be *Subject not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake*. So that a Man is bound in duty to obey Human Laws, and consequently they are a part of the *Rule of Conscience*.

*Secondly*, Human Laws do not bind the Conscience by any Virtue in themselves, but merely by Virtue of God's Law, who has commanded us, both by *Nature* and *Scripture*, to obey our Superiors. Conscience is *our judgment of our actions according to God's Law*, and has no Superior but God alone: but yet we are bound in Conscience to obey Men, because therein we obey God.

*Thirdly*, Human Laws do not farther bind the Conscience, than as they are agreeable to the *Laws of God*; so that when Men command any thing sinful, we must not obey. For God has not given any Man power to alter his Laws, or impose any thing inconsistent with them.

*Fourthly*, Tho' Human Laws, generally speaking, bind the Conscience; yet I do not say, that every Human Law (tho' consistent with God's Law)

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do's at all times and in all cases, oblige every Man's Conscience to active obedience to it, so as that he sins against God, if he transgress it. For then who could be innocent? But *First*, where the Public or some private Person shall suffer damage or inconvenience by our not observing the Law; or *Secondly*, where the *Manner* of our not obeying it argues *contempt* of Authority, or sets an ill example, there the transgression of a Human Law is *sinful*; and not in other cases. So that there are many cases in which a Man may transgress a purely Human Law, and yet not be a sinner before God; provided, I say, there be no contempt of Authority, or ill example in it; for either of these makes it a *sin*. For this I insist upon, that God's Law and the public good require, that *Authority* be held sacred; and therefore when Governors insist upon a thing, tho' it be trifling or inconvenient, yet we must not even *seem* to contest the matter with them, provided it be not *sinful*. For to affront their Authority, or to encourage others by our example to do it; is a greater evil to the public, than our obedience to an inconvenient Law can easily be.

IV. I shall now consider *the power of Human Laws to oblige the Conscience in the instance of Church Communion*. And here I affirm, that *every Man is bound in Conscience to join with the Church establish'd by Law in the place where he lives, so long as that Church is a true sound part of the Catholic Church; and nothing sinful is requir'd as a condition of Communion with it*. For I have already shewn, that Men are bound to obey Human Laws, that are not contrary to the Laws of God; and therefore they must obey in Church Matters, unless it can be shew'd, that God has forbid-

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den Men to make Laws about Religion; which can never be done.

But farther, I earnestly desire it may be well consider'd by *Dissenters*, that we are all really bound by the Laws of *Jesus Christ* and the Nature of his Religion, to preserve as much as in us lies, the Unity of the Church, which consists not only in professing the same faith, but joining together in the same worship. And therefore whoever breaks the Unity, doth really transgress the Laws of *Jesus Christ*, and is guilty of *Schism*, which is so much caution'd against, and so highly condemn'd in *Scripture*.

Those therefore, who think they are no more bound to come to Church, than to obey any common Act of Parliament, are greatly mistaken; because they break not only the Law of Man, but the Law of God. For tho' all the circumstances of Worship are *Human Institutions*, yet the public Worship it self, under Public Lawful Governors, is of Divine appointment; and no Man can renounce it without sinning against *Christ* as well as *Human Laws*.

A *Divine Law* cloath'd with circumstances of Man's appointment, creates another kind of obligation, than a Law that commands a thing perfectly indifferent. In the former case we must obey, because 'tis God's *own* Law; in the other we only obey Man, because God has obliged us in general to obey our Superiors.

God commands every Subject to pay tribute to whom tribute is due: but Human Authority determines, out of what goods, and in what proportion he must pay. Now, because Human Authority interposes, if a Man can by fraud detain the King's right, do's he incur no other guilt, than breaking

an Act of Parliament, and being liable to penalties, if he be detected? Yes certainly; for *Tribute* being injoynd by God's Law, the Man is unjust, and breaks God's Law; and his willingness to suffer the penalties do's not lessen his guilt. The Case is the same as to *Church-Unity*. For tho' Human Laws prescribe particular circumstances and Forms of Worship: yet God's Law obliges us to keep the Unity of the Church, as much as to pay the King his due. And that Man that paies his just debts by such a method, as the Law of the Land declares to be unjust, may as well acquit himself from *knavery* before God; as that Man, that chuses a way of public worship in opposition to the Church-Laws, can acquit himself of *Schism* before God. Nay, separation from the Church is so much against the Law of God, that shou'd Human Laws grant a *Toleration*, and call no Man to an account for separation from the establish'd Church; yet such a separation wou'd still be a Schism, and a Sin against God. For no Human Law can make that Lawful, which God's Law has forbidden.

V. It remains, that I speak of the *Authority of Conscience*, or how far a Man is obliged to be guided by his Conscience in his actions; that is, how far we are obliged to act, or not act, when we are convinc'd in our judgment, that the action is commanded or forbidden by God. Now our judgment concerning what God has commanded, or forbidden, or left indifferent is either right or wrong. If right, we are said to have a *right Conscience*; if wrong, we have an *erroneous Conscience*. There is also a *doubting Conscience*, when we know not well how to make any judgment at all; but of this I shall Treat in another Chapter.

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Now if our *Conscience* or judgment be *right*, that is, according to God's Law, without doubt we are for ever bound to act according to it ; nor can we sin in doing so, whatever the consequence be. But the great question is, what we must do, when our *Conscience* is *erroneous* and *mistaken* ; and to answer this, I lay down three Rules, which I think, may give any Man satisfaction.

First, *Where a Man is mistaken in his judgment, even in that case it is alwaies a sin to act against it.* Tho' we take a sin for a duty, or a duty for a sin : yet so long as we are thus persuaded, it will be a great crime, to act against this persuasion. Because by so doing we act against the best light we have at present ; and therefore our *will* is as wicked, as if it had acted against a *true* light. Nothing but *Conscience* can guide our actions ; and tho' an *erroneous* *Conscience* is a very bad and unsafe guide ; yet still 'tis the only guide we have : and if we may lawfully refuse to be guided by it in one instance, we may with as much reason reject its guidance in all. What is a wilful sin, or a sin against knowledge, but acting otherwise, than we were convinc'd to be our duty ? Is not that Man thought sincere, that acts as he believes ; and that Man an hypocrite, that acts otherwise, whether his judgment be true or false ? He, who being under a mistake, acts contrary to his judgment, wou'd certainly upon the same temptation act contrary to it, were his judgment never so well inform'd. And therefore his *Will* being as bad in the one case as in the other, he is equally a sinner as to the *Wilfulness* of the Crime, tho' indeed in other respects there will be a *great difference* in the cases. Shou'd a *Jew* turn *Christian*, or a *Papist* turn *Protestant*, while yet they believe their  
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their former Religions to be true, we shou'd all believe them to be great *Villains* and *Hypocrites*, because they did it upon base principles, and in contradiction to their judgments. Nay, we shou'd all think more favorably of a *Protestant*, that being seduced by a cunning *Papist*, did really out of Conscience go over to the *Romanists*, than of such Persons. All this put together shews, that no Man can in any case act against his judgment, but he is guilty of sin in so doing.

Secondly, *The mistake of a Man's judgment, may be of such a nature, that as it will be a sin to act against his judgment, so it will likewise be a sin to act according to it.* For that action is good and a duty, which God has commanded, and that is a sin which he has forbidden. 'Tis not our Opinion, but his Law, that makes things good or evil. And therefore we shall be for ever obliged to do some actions and forbear others, whatever our judgment be; because we cannot alter the Nature of things. For if the Moral goodness or badness of actions were to be measur'd by Men's opinions; then duty and sin wou'd be the most uncertain things in the World, and what is good or evil to day, wou'd be the contrary to morrow, as any Man's opinion alters. But such consequences are intolerable; and therefore, tho' a Man do's follow his judgment, yet he may be guilty of sin (and be damn'd for it too) if his judgment lead him to act against the Law of God.

But it must be observ'd, that I do not say, that every action according to a mistaken judgment is sinful; but that a Man's mistake may be such, that it will be a sin to act either against it, or according to it; For a Man may often mistake, and yet not sin; provided his mistakes do not lead him

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him to a breach of God's Law. For *First*, if a Man believe a thing to be commanded by God, which is neither commanded nor forbidden; as if he think himself obliged to pray *seven or three times a day*; he is certainly mistaken, because God has bound him up to neither. And therefore, since God has not commanded the contrary, he may safely act according to his mistake; nay, so long as his mistake continues, he is bound to do so. *Secondly*, If a Man believe a thing to be forbidden by God, which is neither commanded nor forbidden; as if he think that God has forbidden him to play at Cards; in this case he may follow his false opinion without sin; nay he is bound to follow it. Because, since God has not forbidden it, 'tis no sin to follow his mistaken Conscience; but 'tis a sin to act against it. But then in other cases, when a Man thinks that to be sinful or indifferent, which God commands; or that to be Lawful or a Duty which God forbids; here the mistake is dangerous, and it is a sin to act against his judgment, or according to it.

*Thirdly* therefore, for the untying this great difficulty, I say, *That the great thing to be attended to in this case of a Man's following a Mistaken Judgment, is the faultiness or innocence of the mistake upon which he acts; for according as this is, so will his guilt in acting according to it, be either greater or less, or none at all.* If the mistake be such, as an honest minded Man might make; if he did his best to understand his duty, and wanted means to know it better; then we think him innocent; and not properly guilty of any sin, tho' his action is contrary to God's Law. For no Man is obliged to do more, than what is in his power to do; and whatever a Man is not obliged to do, it is no  
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sin in him, if he do it not. Since he cou'd not understand better, his mistake and acting according to his mistake are not sinful.

The only point is this; whether the Man be to be blam'd for his *erroneous Conscience*, or no. If the error be not his fault, he doth not sin in acting according to it; but if he had power and opportunities of informing his Conscience better, and yet neglected so to do, tho' it was his duty; then the Man sins, while he acts contrary to God's Law under the Mistake; and his sin is greater or less in proportion to his negligence. Thus you see, that God enables all Men to do their duty; and that none lie under a necessity of sinning, but those who wilfully embracing false Principles, fall into sin, whether they act according to their Conscience, or against it.

Having now done with the *Five Principles* of my Discourse, I proceed to my first intended business; that is, to speak to the Case of those that *separate from the Communion of the Church of England upon this pretense, That it is against their Conscience to join with us in it.* And that I may clear this point, I shall do two things; *First*, I shall *separate those who can plead Conscience for their Non-Conformity, from those that cannot*; for a great many that pretend Conscience, refuse Communion with us upon another Principle. *Secondly*, I shall inquire, *how far this Plea of Conscience, when truly made, will justify any Dissenter, that continues in separation from the Church.*

*First* then, that I may Distinguish the true Pretenders to Conscience from the false ones, I shall lay down this proposition, that *no Man can justly plead Conscience for his separation from the Church of England, or say, that it is against his Conscience*

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to join in Communion with it, unless he is persuaded, that he cannot Communicate with us without sinning against God in so doing. For God's Law is the only Rule to judge, whether an action be a Duty, or a Sin, or indifferent ; and Conscience is nothing else, but a Man's judgment of an action, whether it be a Duty, or a Sin, or indifferent by that Rule. So that a Man cannot be bound in Conscience to do or forbear any action, unless he is persuaded, that God's Law has commanded or forbidden it ; and therefore no Man can justly plead Conscience for Non-Conformity, unless he is persuaded, that God's Law has forbidden him to join with us.

If it be said, that a Man, who do's not think our Communion directly sinful, may notwithstanding think it his duty to join constantly with others, for his greater Edification, or the like cause ; I answer, that my proposition still holds, because he thinks, that he is bound by God's Law to join with others, which Law he must not break, by leaving them to join with us. Again, If it be said, that a Man, who do's not think our Communion unlawful, but only doubts of the lawfulness of it, may justly plead Conscience for Non-Conformity, so long as his doubts remain ; I answer, that if he thinks it a sin to do any thing with a doubting Conscience, then he thinks, that our Communion is forbidden by God, so long as his doubts remain : but if he do's not think it a sin to act with a doubting Conscience, then it cannot go against his Conscience to join with us. So that my proposition remains true, that none can justly plead Conscience for Non-Conformity, but those who think, that they cannot join with us without sin.

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Now since this proposition is so certainly true, how many Men's pretences to Conscience for their separating from us, are hereby cut off? For *First*, those that separate, either because they have been disobliged by some Church Man, or to please a Relation, or increase their Fortunes, or procure or regain a Reputation, or for any other worldly consideration, cannot plead Conscience for separation. Nor *Secondly*, can those Lay People, who are resolv'd to hear their beloved *Teachers* in Conventicles, since they cannot hear them in our Churches, and who wou'd join with us, if we wou'd suffer those *Godly Men* to Preach; nor *Thirdly*, those who dislike *Forms* of Prayer, *Ceremonies*, &c. thinking them not convenient, tho' they do not judge them to be sinful; nor *Fourthly*, those who separate upon the account of *Edification*, or acquaintance with Persons of another persuasion; or because many *Godly Persons* condemn our way; all these, I say, cannot justly plead Conscience for their separation. Because neither fancy, nor example can be the Rule of any Man's Conscience, but only the Law of God: and therefore such Persons cannot justly plead Conscience, because they do not think our Communion to be forbidden by God's Law. Nor *Fifthly*, can those plead Conscience for their separation, who think that our Governors have encroach'd too much upon *Christian Liberty*, and laid too much stress upon *indifferent Things*. For suppose the Governors be faulty in it, yet the *Conscience* of the Subject is not concern'd, so long as the things commanded do not interfere with any Law of God. Nor *Sixthly*, can those justly plead Conscience for their separation, who can join with us sometimes both in Prayer and the Lord's Supper. For if our Com-

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munion be sinful, with what Conscience do they dare to join in it at all? And if it be lawful once, it is a duty alwaies.

But leaving these false pretenders, I proceed to the case of those, that can *justly* plead Conscience for their separation, or who think it a sin to join with us; for I shall consider the Case of those that plead a *doubting* Conscience afterwards, in a particular Chapter.

*Secondly*, Therefore, I shall inquire *how far this Plea of Conscience, when truly made, will justify any Dissenter, that continues in Separation from the Church.* For there are many, that say, they wou'd join with us with all their hearts, but they are really perswaded, they cannot do it without sin. For they think, that it is against the command of Christ to use *Forms* of Prayer, the Cross in Baptism, kneeling at the Sacrament, and the like. And surely, say they, you wou'd not have us join in these practices, which we verily believe to be sins. They are so well satisfy'd in their separation, upon these accounts, that they think themselves safe, and that they are able to justify themselves to God and all the World.

Now in answer to this, I grant, that if the things they except against, be really forbidden by God, then they are not to be blam'd; for then separation from us is not a sin, but a duty. Nay, supposing that they think that to be forbidden, which is not really forbidden; yet so long as they think so, they cannot act against their mistaken Conscience without sin. But then the point we stand upon is this, that *our Governors do require nothing that is forbidden by God*; and therefore their thinking our Communion unlawful will not acquit them from being guilty of sin before God.

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I am not now to answer the particular objections against our Establishments. This has been sufficiently done already in the several foregoing Chapters. The Point I am concern'd in, is this, whether a Man's thinking our Communion to be unlawful, when indeed it is not unlawful, will justify his separation from it: and I answer, that a Man's false persuasion will not justify his breaking of God's Law. So that if God's Law do's command me to hold Communion with the Church where I have no just cause to break it, my false persuasion will not acquit me from sin before God, if I separate from it without just cause.

Tho' the truth of this appears from what I have said before, yet I shall further confirm it by asking this question. When *St. Paul* thought himself bound in duty to persecute Christians, was his persecution sinful, or no? Yes surely; for he calls himself *the greatest of sinners* for that very reason. And therefore a Man's thinking a thing to be a *duty* or lawful, will not acquit him before God for doing that thing, if it be against God's Law. So that it infinitely concerns all *Dissenters* to consider well, before they separate. For Schism is a crying sin, and as vehemently spoken against by Christ, and his Apostles, and the Fathers, as any sin whatever. Let *Dissenters* look to it, that they be not guilty of it; for their false persuasion, that our Communion is unlawful, will not make their separation to be no Schism.

This matter will appear a little more evident, if we put the case in another instance, wherein we are not so nearly concern'd. Suppose a *Papist*, that heartily believes *Papery* to be the only true Religion,

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gion, do's in obedience to it worship Images and the Host. This person wou'd certainly abhor these practises, did he think them to be Idolatrous ; but he believes them to be necessary duties. And yet we do all charge such *Papists* with *Idolatry*, tho' they disclaim it, and profess they do no more than their duty, when they give Divine worship to such objects. And we charge them rightly in this ; for if it be really *Idolatry* by God's word to do so ; then it will be *Idolatry* in any Man to do so, let his opinion be what it will. For a Man's false opinion doth not alter the nature of things. Now the case is the same in the matter before us ; for causeless separation is as properly *Schism*, as worshipping a Creature is *Idolatry* : and he is as much a *Schismatic*, who thinks it his duty to separate, as he is an *Idolater*, who thinks it his duty to worship a Creature. A Man's mistake, according to the greater or less *culpability* of it, will more or less excuse him before God in both instances : but it cannot change the nature either of *Schism* or *Idolatry*.

But it will be said ; What shall a Man do ? He cannot conform with a safe Conscience ; and yet he sins, if he do not. I answer, he is to take all imaginable care to rectify his mistakes, and then he may do his duty without sinning against his Conscience. Now the only way of doing this, is by laying aside Pride, Passion, Interest, and all other carnal Prepossessions, and endeavoring seriously and impartially to understand his duty ; considering without prejudice, what can be said on both sides, advising with the wisest Men, and above all things seriously endeavoring to understand the Nature and Spirit of the *Christian Religion*, practising all undoubted duties, and begging  
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God's Assistance for the Matters in question.

Well ; but supposing a Man has done all this, and after all his endeavors is persuaded that he cannot join with us without sin, what shall this Man do ? This is the great difficulty, and I have two things to say to it.

*First*, We do heartily wish, that this was the Case of our *Dissenters* ; for then I am persuaded, our scandalous divisions wou'd presently be at an end. But alas ! we fear they have not done their duty in this Matter ; that they have not heartily endeavor'd to satisfy themselves. If they had, surely they shou'd, before they pronounc'd *Conformity* to be unlawful, be able to produce some one plain Text to prove it so. For the Texts they produce are such, as had they in the least examin'd them, cou'd scarce have been wrested to such a sense. Nay, the generality of *Dissenters* do not seem to have much consulted their own Teachers in this affair. If they had, they wou'd think better of our way than they do. For the most eminent of their own Ministers are ready to declare, that tho' some things may be inconvenient, yet a *Lay Person* may lawfully join with us in all things ; nay, they themselves are ready upon occasion to join in all the instances of *Lay Communion*. In short, most of our *Dissenters* have taken up their opinions hand over head, and scarce think it possible for them to be in the wrong.

Shew us a Man, that has no end to serve by Religion, but only to go to Heaven, and in the choice of his way is only concern'd, that it be the way that leads him thither ; that is wonderfully solicitous about his duty, and will refuse no pains to understand it ; that in the midst of Church divisions is modest, humble and docible, and be-

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believes that he and his friends may be mistaken ; that thinks his Governors may be wiser than himself, and that every opinion, that he has inconsiderately taken up, ought not to be maintain'd against Authority ; a Man, that where his duty to God seems to thwart his duty to Man, endeavors to be truly inform'd ; and to that end begs God's assistance, and uses the best helps and guides he can, hears and reads the arguments on both sides, and is byass'd neither way ; I say, shew us such a Man, and we readily grant, he has done his best to satisfy himself. But then we must add, that we believe, such a Man will soon think it, not only lawful, but his Duty also to Conform.

*Secondly*, If a Man has really done his best to satisfy his Conscience, and yet thinks it a sin to conform ; tho' his separation be *materially* a *Schism*, yet he is not *formally* guilty of it. For all those that commit *Schism*, are not equally guilty of it. Those that separate to serve a turn, are horribly and inexcusably guilty of *Schism* ; and those that separate thro' such mistakes, as they might have avoided if they had been careful, are very blamable, and are bound, as they love their Souls, to take more care of informing their Consciences, that so they may leave their sin : but when God, who *searches the hearts*, knows that a Man did his best, and had not means or opportunities of understanding better ; then tho' the Man commit *Schism*, yet he is innocent of it. And God, who judgeth of Men by their inward sincerity, will impute it to his ignorance, and forgive it at the last day ; especially if this innocently mistaken Man be careful in the following points.

*First*, That he be not obstinate, but ready to receive

ceive Conviction. *Secondly*, That he separates no more than he needs must ; but comply in all those instances, where he is satisfy'd he may do it with a safe Conscience. *Thirdly*, That where he cannot comply, he *patiently* submit to the penalty of the Law ; neither exclaiming at his Governors or the Magistrates, nor using illegal means to get more liberty, but living as a quiet and peaceable Subject. *Fourthly*, That he do not censure those of another persuasion, but shew himself a good Neighbor and friendly to them. Who're observes these things, tho' he dissent from us, I shall be loth to censure him as an *ill Man*, *ill Subject*, or *ill Christian*.

But then all that I have said, do's no more justify or lessen the sin of *Schism*, than the sin of *Idolatry* ; for the case is the same in both, whether a Man be a deluded *Dissenter*, or a deluded *Papist*. And therefore, notwithstanding all that may be said concerning the innocence or excusableness of some Men's mistakes about these matters ; yet nevertheless it infinitely concerns every Person, to have a care how he be engaged either in the one or the other.

To conclude, I have shewn how absolutely necessary 'tis, that every Man shou'd endeavor to inform himself aright, before he disobey his Governors, or separate from the Church ; and that tho' something in our worship be really against his Conscience, yet separation may be a great sin, if a Man shou'd prove to be mistaken in his Notions. And therefore every *Dissenter* ought presently to set about the true informing of his judgment, for fear he live in a grievous sin.

Let him not satisfy himself with frivolous pretenses. For tho' we agree in the rule of *faith* and

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*manners*, yet *Schism* is a dreadful sin, and a Man may be damn'd for that as certainly, as for *heresy* or *drunkenness*. Sure I am, the ancient Fathers thought so. What if the points of *Conformity* be matters of dispute? Who made them so? The *Church of England* wou'd have been well pleas'd, if these Controversies had never been. We think a Man may be a very good *Christian* and go to Heaven, that is not able to defend our Ceremonies, &c. but he that separates upon the account of them, is bound at the peril of his own Salvation, to use the best means he can to be satisfy'd about them.

To those that pretend, that these are subtil points above their capacity, I answer, that since they have understanding enough to find fault and separate, they ought to have honesty enough to seek satisfaction; which is all that we desire of them: otherwise they will never be able to answer to God or Man for the Mischiefs of Separation.

We are bound, especially in this case, to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*. For no Man can disobey his Superiors without sin, unless, after he has us'd his best endeavors, he finds their commands inconsistent with his duty to God. For a Man to disobey, till he has done this, is an unwarrantable thing; and in this Case I now speak of, it is no less than the sin of *Formal Criminal Schism*.

## C H A P. XII.

*The pretense of a Doubting Conscience, Answer'd.*

**I** Come now to the Case of those, who separate, because they *doubt*, whether they may lawfully Communicate with us, or no; and who fear they shou'd sin in doing any thing with a *doubting Conscience*. To this I might answer from the former Chapter; that if Communion with our Church be a Duty, no Man's *doubts* concerning the lawfulness of it will justify his separation from it. For if a Man's *settled persuasion*, that an action is unlawful, will not justify his omission of it, supposing that God commands it; much less will his bare *doubt* excuse him.

But because this answer seems rather to cut the knot, than to unty it, I shall particularly examine this Plea of a *doubting Conscience*, by giving an account, *First*, Of the nature of a *doubting Conscience*. *Secondly*, Of the Rule of it. *Thirdly*, Of the Power that Human Laws have over it. *Fourthly*, Of its Authority, i. e. whether at all, or how far, a Man is obliged by it.

I. In speaking of the Nature of a *doubting Conscience*, I shall Treat, 1. Of *doubting* in General. 2. Of such *doubts* as affect the Conscience. 3. Of the difference between the *doubting* and the *scrupulous Conscience*.

*First* then, A Man is said to *doubt*, when he cannot determin, whether the thing he is considering be so, or be not so; he thinks the *question* probable on both sides, but cannot fix upon either.



So that his mind is like a balance, when by reason of equal weight in both Scales, neither Scale comes to the bottom. 'Tis true, a Man may lean more to one side of the *question*, than the other; and yet be doubtful still: just as one Scale may have more weight than the other, while yet that weight is not able to carry it perfectly down: but when there is so much more evidence on one side, that the mind can determin it self, then the Man *doubts* no longer, but is said to be *Persuaded*; as the Balance is said to be fixt, when there is weight enough to carry it down on either side. 'Tis true, a Man has not alwaies the same degree of *Persuasion*. Sometimes the evidence is so strong, that he entirely assents without the least doubtfulness. This is *Assurance* or *full Persuasion*. At other times the evidence may gain an assent, but not such as excludes all doubts of the contrary. This kind of *Assent* is call'd *Opinion* or *probable Persuasion*. So a greater or a less weight carries down the Scale with greater or less force and briskness. But still, in both these Cases, the Mind is determin'd, the Balance is turn'd, and the doubt is ended; tho' perhaps the Man is not perfectly free from all scruple about the thing.

Secondly then, I shall treat of such doubts as affect the Conscience. A Man may doubt of any thing, which he has to consider: but every doubt do's not affect the Conscience. As a Man's Conscience is affected with nothing but his own actions, so his doubts do not affect his Conscience any farther, than they concern his own actions. And as his Conscience is not affected with his own actions any otherwise, than as they are commanded or forbidden by God's Laws; so his doubts concerning them affect his Conscience no otherwise,  
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than as God's Law may be transgressed in them. So that where a Man apprehends no danger of transgressing God's Law, his doubts about an action do not concern his Conscience.

Thirdly, From what has been said 'tis easie to perceive the difference between the *doubting* and the *Scrupulous Conscience*. Every body knows, that when we speak of a *Resolved Conscience*, we mean, that the Man is satisfy'd, whether the Action be a Duty or a Sin, or indifferent. Now the *Scrupulous Conscience* is a Conscience in some measure Resolved, but yet accompanied with a fear of acting according to that resolution. The Person is convinced, that the thing is fit to be done, and has nothing considerable to object, nor any new reasons to unsettle him; but yet when he comes to act, he is troubled with unaccountable fears. But the *doubting Conscience* is quite different, and is nothing else but the suspense of a Man's judgment in a question about the Duty or the Sin of an Action, occasion'd by the equal (or near equal) probabilities on both sides. The resolv'd Conscience acts chearfully; the scrupulous Conscience acts fearfully; but the doubtful Conscience is not satisfy'd at all, because of the equal appearances of reason on both sides. The Man that has either a resolv'd or a scrupulous Conscience, passes a judgment on the thing; but a doubting Conscience passes no judgment at all; for then it wou'd no longer be a doubting Conscience.

After all it must be acknowledg'd, that truly and strictly speaking, a doubting Conscience is no Conscience at all. For Conscience, as we have often said, is a Man's mind making a judgment about the morality of his actions: but a doubting Conscience wavers, and is a Man's mind making no judgment: and therefore it is not properly a Conscience. And we may

as well say an *unresolv'd resolution*, as a *Doubting Conscience*. However, to comply with Custom, I follow the Common way of speaking.

II. I proceed now to the *Rule* of a *doubting Conscience*; in speaking of which I shall shew, *First*, what kind of Rule Conscience needs in a doubtful case. *Secondly*, what that Rule is.

*First* then, by the Rule of a doubting Conscience I mean, not a Rule by which a Man may resolve all doubts concerning every point, so as to doubt no longer about it; but a Rule, by which he may determin in every doubtful case, so as to act with a safe Conscience, whether he can get rid of his doubts or not. A Rule that determins, not whether a thing in general be Lawful, or no; but what I am to do, where I doubt of the Lawfulness of the thing. For Instance, the Rule of a doubting Conscience is not to determin, whether it be Lawful to play at Cards; but what I must do, if I doubt of the Lawfulness of playing at Cards.

Before a Man acts, he ought to be satisfy'd, that that side of the action, he determins himself to, is, all things consider'd, the more fit and reasonable to be chosen; but it is absurd to say, that no Man must act, till he is able to untie all the difficulties, and resolve all the doubts, that may have been started about the Action. For this in many cases is utterly impossible; the Person may not have sufficient time or means for the doing it. And in such a case, a Man cannot possibly do better, than to get satisfy'd by reason and advice, what is fittest for him to do in the present circumstances, and to proceed accordingly. And this is certainly the usual way of proceeding among the most conscientious Men. Thus have I shewn what kind

of Rule Conscience needs in a doubtful case.

*Secondly* therefore, I shall shew what that Rule is, *first*, by giving an account of the general Rule it self; and then *secondly*, by applying it to the several Heads of doubtful cases.

1. *First* then, since a Man never doubts but upon equal appearances of Reason on both sides; it is plain, that nothing ought to turn the Balance, but greater weight of Reason; and therefore the Rule of a doubting Conscience is, *That in all doubtful cases, that side which, all things consider'd doth appear more reasonable, is to be chosen.*

Some indeed say, that in doubtful cases the *safer side is to be chosen*: but I do purposely avoid the expressing it so, because the Rule is true or false, according as the word *safer side* is expounded.

For *First*, if by *safer side* we mean that side which is more free from danger of sinning, I think the Rule will prove rather a Snare, than a Guide to a Man's mind. For if this Rule be true, most Persons do transgress it every day; nay, the best of Men do frequently expose themselves to such dangers of sinning, as they might have avoided; and this without any reproach from their own Conscience, or any censure from other Men. He that avoids all entertainments, is certainly more free from the danger of intemperance, than others are; and yet when occasion serves, no Man makes any great scruple of going to them. We are not commanded to avoid all possible danger of sinning; but only to avoid all sin, when we are in danger. For otherwise, he that wou'd be Religious, must forsake all worldly business, and retire to a Cloyster.

But to come more strictly to the point; there are many cases, in which the most honest Person do's not think he is obliged to determin himself

to that side of the action, on which he apprehends there is least danger of sinning. For *First*, greater probability will often turn the Balance against the greater safety. Thus if a Man scruple eating *Blood*, and afterwards by discoursing with a Learned Person be satisfy'd that it is far more probable that he may Lawfully eat it, than that he is forbidden to eat it; I believe most men will think, that he may eat it with a quiet Conscience. And yet it is certainly more safe not to eat it; because many do question whether it be Lawful to do so, but all Men grant it may be lawfully forborn. *Secondly*, greater temporal advantages will have weight enough with a very honest Man to over-balance the greater safety. Thus if after the strictest inquiry a Man be not satisfy'd, that he owes a sum of Money, which another demands confidently and with great appearance of Reason; there are equal probabilities on both sides. If he pay the Money, perhaps his circumstances are such, that he wrongs his Wife and Children; and if he refuse to pay it, perhaps he detains another Man's right from him. In this case, since it is as probable that the demand is *unjust*, as that it is *just*; I believe most Men will say, that he ought not to prejudice himself and his family, till it be either by Law adjudg'd, or he have more convincing proofs, that he ought to pay it. It appears therefore, that any Man (who is wise as well as good) may in many cases wave the *safer* for the more *Prudent* side; and consequently it is not alwaies a Rule to a doubting Conscience to chuse the *safer* side, or the side which is more free from danger of sinning.

But *Secondly*, if by *safer side* we mean that which is *freest from all dangers and inconveniences of all kind whatsoever*, and do's best serve all the *Spiritual* and

and Temporal interests that a wise and good Man can propose; I freely grant, that it is the *only* Rule to a doubting Conscience to follow the *safer side*. For then the *safer side* is the *more reasonable side*, which, as I said before, is in all doubtful cases to be chosen.

Having given an account of the general Rule of a doubting Conscience, I come now in the *Second* place to make application of it to the several Heads of doubtful cases. Now all doubts of Conscience are either *single* or *double*. It is a *single* doubt, when a Man doubts on one side, but is satisfy'd on the other. For instance, he doubts, whether it be Lawful to do the action, but is satisfy'd he may Lawfully omit it; or he doubts whether he may Lawfully omit it, but is satisfy'd he may Lawfully do it. It is a *double* doubt, when a Man doubts on both sides; when he is at a loss what to do, because he fears he may sin, whether he do's the action, or do's it not.

*First*, As to the case of a *single* doubt we may thus apply the *General Rule*. When a Man doubts only on one side, it is more *Reasonable*, if all other Considerations be equal, to chuse that side which he hath no doubt of. In such a case *we must not do what we doubt of*; for it is unreasonable to run the risque of sinning, when a Man can without any inconveniency avoid it. If a Man doubt, whether it be Lawful for a Christian to *go to Law*, and cannot positively determin with himself, whether it be *Lawful* or *Unlawful* so to do; in this and all other such-like cases the Rule is plain, that while he doubts, it is more reasonable to forbear; because he runs a hazard in venturing upon what he doubts of, but he runs no hazard in forbearing. But then, if there be other Considerations to over-  
balance

balance this consideration of *uncertainty*; it will be more reasonable to chuse that side, which I did before doubt of. Nay, it is our Duty so to do; for if I doubt, I do by *doubting* own, that I cannot tell whether the Action be *Lawful* or *Unlawful*; and surely then the weight of pressing Considerations ought to turn the Balance; otherwise I cannot answer to my self or the World, for the consequences that may ensue. Thus if I am Guardian to an Orphan, whose Estate is so entangled, that a Law-suit is necessary for the clearing it; I am obliged, notwithstanding my doubt, to secure his Right by going to Law. To conclude; it is not only *Lawful*, but *Advisable*, to do that which we doubt of, if a great good may be compass'd, or a great evil may be avoided, by the doing of it.

*Secondly*, In the Case of a *double* doubt, when a Man fears he may sin, whether he do the action or do's it not, it is in vain to say, he must get his doubt remov'd; for perhaps that may be impossible thro' want of time or good Counsel. He is therefore to follow the same Rule as in other doubtful Cases; that is to say, *he is to act as reasonably as he can*; and if he do this, I am sure he incurs no blame. But because the application of this *General Rule* is various, according to many circumstances that may happen, therefore I shall comprise all the varieties in these *Four* following Propositions.

1. If the sin we are afraid of, appear equal on both sides, we must do that which we doubt the least of; that is, we must do that which appears *more* probable to be free from the danger of sin.
2. If we think there is equal danger on both sides, we must do that which appears to be the less sin.
3. If we think the one side more probable, and the

the other, less sinful; we must act according to the degree of the probability, or the sin. If there be much more probability on the one side than on the other, and but small difference between the sins; then we must act that which is more *probable*. But then, if the consequences on one side, if a Man shou'd happen to be mistaken, be so terrible, that they over-balance all the probabilities on the other side; a wise Man will act that, which sets him free from these consequences. Thus if a Man be try'd for his Life, and the evidence against him be not so full as to create a persuasion in the Jury that he is Guilty; in this case, they shou'd rather acquit him, notwithstanding some probabilities of his Guilt, than run the hazard of doing *Murder* by condemning the innocent. 4. If a Man doubts equally on both sides, and the sin appear equal on both sides; then his own *ease*, or *advantage*, or *reputation*, or any other *prudential* inducements must determin him to do the action he doubts about; or to let it alone. When all is said, every Man in doubtful cases is left to his own discretion; and if he acts according to the best Reason he has, he is not culpable, tho' he be mistaken in his measures.

But to render these Rules about a *double doubt* more intelligible and more useful, I shall give the Reader an instance of a Case, in which they are all apply'd. The case is this,

Here is a Man, that thinks it his Duty to receive the *Sacrament* constantly, or at least frequently; but on the other side, tho' no grievous sin lies upon his Conscience unrepented of, yet by reason of his mistakes about the Nature and Ends of the *Lord's Supper*, and the dispositions that fit a Man for it, he is under great fears of his being unqualify'd for it.

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Now the question is, what this Man, who after all his endeavors cannot get over these difficulties, ought to do. For if he do's not come to the *Sacrament*, he doubts he sins on that account; if he do's come, he doubts he approaches unworthily, and so sins upon that account. Shall he receive the *Sacrament* doubting as he do's? or shall he forbear it doubting as he do's?

Now a Man cannot resolve this question, but by applying the foregoing Rules after this manner.

*First*, Since the Man doubteth, that he sins, whether he come to the *Sacrament* or forbear; it must be consider'd, which side appears most likely to free him from sin. Now I am confident, he will think it more reasonable to come meanly prepar'd, than customarily to abstain; because he is much more certain, that 'tis his duty to frequent it, than that he is unprepar'd for it. Indeed were he a debauch'd Person; or had he been lately guilty of some notorious Sin, and came to the Lord's Table with that sin unrepented of; he had reason to dread unworthy receiving, as much as abstaining: but since the case is quite otherwise, since he is mistaken while he thinks himself unworthy; certainly he runs a greater danger by absenting himself, than by coming with his doubts about him. Because his doubts of his unworthiness, being only surmises, cannot possibly be so well grounded, as his doubts, that he sins by habitually abstaining, which is expressly forbidden by God's Law.

*Secondly*, Tho' it can hardly be suppos'd in our case, yet let us suppose, that the Man has as much reason to believe, that he is an unworthy receiver, if he receive at all; as he has to believe, that it is a sin in him if he do not receive; the question then is, which is the least sin, to receive unworthily out of a sense of

of duty, or not to receive at all. For the least sin is to be chosen, when he cannot avoid both. For my part, I think, that a Man who obeys one known Law of God for Conscience sake, when he cannot do it without breaking another Law in the manner of performance; I say, I think That that Man, tho' he is not innocent; yet is *far less* guilty, than he who omits a *known* duty, and so breaks a *known* Law of God for Conscience sake. Suppose two Men, who know themselves to be unfit so much as to say their Prayers; one of these Men doth upon this account forbear all Prayers; the other dares not to forbear his usual offices, tho' he believes he performs them sinfully. Now I dare say, that all Men will think him the better Man, who says his Prayers; tho' both of them be very faulty. Because whatever a Man's indisposition be, he is obliged to do his duty as well as he can; and it is better to perform a duty after an ill manner, than wholly to omit it. Since therefore the *greater* sin is to be avoided, when a Man is under a necessity of committing one; it's more *reasonable* that a Man shou'd come to the *Sacrament*, doubting of his unworthiness, than that he shou'd habitually abstain from it.

If it be said, that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*; 1 Cor. 11. 29. and that there cannot be a greater sin, than that which will actually *damn* a Man: I answer, that let the sin of receiving unworthily be as damnable, as we can reasonably suppose it; yet the sin of totally withdrawing from it is much greater and more damnable. So that if he who partakes unworthily, doth *eat and drink damnation to himself*; he that partakes not at all, is so

‘ far from mending the matter, that he doth much  
 ‘ increase that damnation. And certainly, did Men  
 ‘ seriously consider, what a sin it is to live without  
 ‘ the Sacrament, and what dreadful consequences  
 ‘ they bring upon themselves hereby, they wou’d  
 ‘ not look upon it as so slight a matter to neglect  
 ‘ it; but what apprehensions soever they had of  
 ‘ the sin and danger of receiving unworthily, they  
 ‘ wou’d think it more sinful and more dangerous  
 ‘ not to receive at all.

‘ *Thirdly*, Suppose the Man takes all opportuni-  
 ‘ ties of receiving the Sacrament, tho’ perhaps he  
 ‘ is not often very well satisfy’d about his prepara-  
 ‘ tion: but since his last receiving he finds he has  
 ‘ liv’d more loosely than he was wont, or he has  
 ‘ been very lately guilty of some grievous sin; so  
 ‘ that he thinks himself unfit to receive it at his  
 ‘ next usual time. Upon this he is in a great per-  
 ‘ plexity; for he thinks he has more reason to be-  
 ‘ lieve he sins, if he receives in these circumstan-  
 ‘ ces, than if he forbears; because he is more cer-  
 ‘ tain that God forbids him to receive unworthily,  
 ‘ than he is certain, that God commands him to  
 ‘ receive upon every opportunity. But then, if he  
 ‘ be really bound to receive upon every opportuni-  
 ‘ ty, he is sensible in that case, it is a greater sin  
 ‘ to neglect this duty, than to perform it unwor-  
 ‘ thily, so long still as he performs it out of Con-  
 ‘ science. On one side he runs a greater danger of  
 ‘ sinning; on the other, if he be mistaken, he sins  
 ‘ in a greater degree. What now is the Man to do  
 ‘ in this case?

‘ I answer; *First*, It is very reasonable that he shou’d  
 ‘ forbear receiving once or twice, for his exercise  
 ‘ of repentance and better preparation against ano-  
 ‘ ther opportunity. Because, since we have no rea-  
 ‘ son

son to think that God has commanded us to receive so many times a year, any more than that we shou'd pray so many times a day ; we are not obliged by an exprefs Law to receive upon every opportunity : but there is an exprefs Law against receiving unworthily, and therefore there is greater danger in doing so. So that the consideration of the certain danger ought to over-balance that of the greater sin ; and the Man ought rather to defer his receiving, than to receive in his present circumstances. But *Secondly*, a Man must not habitually absent himself upon the account of unworthiness. For I have shewn, that there is more danger of sinning by not receiving at all, than by receiving unworthily ; and there is a much greater sin in wholly withdrawing, than in coming with never so great fears of being unfit. And therefore he must receive frequently, tho' he be in danger of doing it unworthily, rather than not receive at all.

*Fourthly*, If the Person think, that the danger of sinning and the sin it self are equal, whether he receive or no ; then he is to consider the inducements of Prudence and Interest, and they are to turn the Balance. And it is plain, that it is better to receive than to forbear, upon these accounts. For besides the Temporal advantages of receiving, he reaps this Spiritual profit by it, *viz.* that he takes the best method of growing more *worthy*, and curing his *doubts* ; whereas by absenting himself his doubts increase, and he is in great danger of losing that sense of Religion, which he now has.

Thus have I shewn how to apply all the Rules concerning a *double doubt* ; and if I have dwelt too long upon this subject, I hope the

frequency and importance of the case will excuse me.

III. Having settled the *Notion* and *Rule* of a Doubting Conscience, I come now in the *Third* place to speak of the power of *human Laws* over a *Doubting Conscience*. And my Assertion is, that wherever lawful Authority has commanded an action, that command is (generally speaking) a sufficient warrant for a Man to do that action, tho' he doubts whether in it self it be lawful or no. That I may speak clearly to this point, I shall, 1. premise some things. 2. shew the grounds of my assertion. 3. answer the objections brought against it.

I premise Five things. *First*, That no Authority upon earth can oblige Men to do what God forbids, or to forbear what God commands. *Secondly*, If a Man thinks that thing, which his Governors oblige him to, is sinful; tho' he be mistaken, he cannot do that action without sinning. But then, if he be mistaken, he also sins in disobeying; if he be mistaken thro' his own fault. *Thirdly*, If a Man doubt, whether the action enjoind by Authority be sinful or no; yet if he think it unlawful to act against his private doubt, he cannot do that action without sin. But then, if this Notion of his be false (as I shall shew it is) he sins also in disobeying, if he be mistaken thro' his own fault. *Fourthly*, if a Man has been so extremely careless in learning his duty, that he doubts of the plainest matter; in such a case a Man is highly accountable for doing that which contradicts the Law of God, tho' he did it purely in obedience to that Authority which God has set over him, and purely in compliance with this true principle, that in doubtful cases we

must

must be guided by our Superiors. For certainly, if a sinful thing be commanded, not only he that commands, but he that obeys also, must answer for it, whether he do it *doubtingly*, or with a *persuasion* of its lawfulness. Only we must remember, *First*, that it is true only in such cases, where the Man might have known his duty, had he not been careless. For if a Man be ignorant or *doubtful*, because he wanted means or opportunities of informing himself, he is not guilty of sin before God, tho' he break God's Law. *Secondly*, that when this case happens, the sin doth not lie in obeying his Superiors with a doubting Conscience; but in his doing that, which he would have known to be sinful, if he had been so careful as he shou'd have been. For obeying his Superiors, whether with a doubt or without one, is no part of the sin. *Fifthly*, I premise, that whatever the power of Superiors be for the over-ruling a private doubt, it must not destroy the Truth, or take away the use, of the foregoing Rules in the Case of a double Doubt. Because the case of obeying Superiors, when we doubt of the Lawfulness of their commands, is a double Doubt as properly as any other: and therefore, if it be two to one more probable, that the command is unlawful, than that it is lawful, we must not obey it by the first Rule. But then, tho' the Authority of Superiors alone will not turn the Balance; yet there are usually such considerations of the greater sin and more dreadful consequences of *disobeying*, as will outweigh all the probabilities on the other side, and make it more reasonable to obey. However, if the command be lawful, a Man's false opinion that it is sinful, will not excuse him; unless his mistake be such as he cou'd not rectify.

1. These things being premis'd, the plain question is this, whether in the case of a pure doubt about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of an action, where the probabilities are on both sides pretty equal, and where likewise the Man concern'd has done all that he was oblig'd to do for the satisfying himself, whether, I say, in this case the command of a lawful Superior do's not oblige the Man to do that of which he doubteth; I affirm, it do's oblige him so to do; and therefore,

2. I shall shew the grounds of my assertion. And *First*, Modesty obliges us to pay as much deference to the judgment of our Superiors, as this comes to. If a doubt shou'd arise about the lawfulness of any civil practise, we shou'd without any great difficulty be determin'd by the judgment of a few Learned, Prudent, and honest Persons, whom we think better able to judge of the case than our selves; and do's it not argue much self-conceit and great contempt of our Superiors, to refuse the same respect to their judgment, whose business it is to consult and command for the best.

*Secondly*, Bishop Sanderson and other Casuists agree, that in all disputed cases, he that is in possession of the thing contended for, has the advantage of the other, that contends with him, supposing all other things be equal. Thus, if I am in possession of an Estate which another claims, I cannot justly be dispossest, till the other Man's Title appears to be better than mine. Now in our Case the Superior asserteth his right and commandeth; the Subject questioneth his right, because he doubts whether the command be not sinful; but since the Superior is in possession of the Authority to command, the Subject must by no means  
by

by his disobedience dispossess him of that Authority, till he is convinc'd, that he has greater reason to disobey, than to obey. But this is impossible, because the reasons are suppos'd equal on both sides.

*Thirdly*, Since in all doubtful Cases it is a common rule, that the safer side is to be chosen, 'tis certain, that 'tis safer to obey than to disobey in a doubtful case. For there is a plain Law of God that commands us to obey Superiors in all lawful things; and if the command be unlawful, the only hazard we run, is of transgressing some Law of God, which we did not know, and which perhaps we were not bound, or had not means to know: but in a doubtful case it is very uncertain, whether the Law of God forbid the thing or no; and if the command be lawful, then we run the hazard of transgressing a plain Law which we cannot but know, and which is of the greatest importance to Mankind.

*Fourthly*, Since in all cases we must do as we wou'd have others do to us, let us consider, whether we shou'd not think it unreasonable for our own inferiours to contradict our Rules upon pretense of *doubting* about their being lawful. If a Parent shou'd command his Son to sit uncover'd before him, or a Master command his Servant to abstain a Dinner on the Lord's Day, and either of them shou'd refuse to do so, because he is not satisfy'd that the thing is lawful; wou'd not a Parent or Master say, *I am to judge what is fit for you to do, and you must not think by your foolish doubts and scruples to controul my commands?* I dare say, most Men will think this a very just reply. And if so, then our Superior also is to be obey'd in purely doubtful cases, notwithstanding our



our doubt. And if we think otherwise, it is because our own *Liberty* and *Interest* are concern'd, and we are prejudiced in favor of our selves.

*Fifthly*, If Superiors may not determin in merely doubtful cases, their authority signifies nothing, nor can it secure the public happiness. For there is no *indifferent* thing, but some Person or other will doubt whether it be lawful; and if such a doubt be a just reason to deny obedience, what will be the consequence of such a principle, but perpetual confusions? For instance, if a Prince make War, and every ignorant and unexperienced Subject may lawfully withdraw his assistance, in case he doubts whether that War be lawful or no; what a sad case wou'd that Kingdom be in? But these consequences are intolerable, and therefore the principle from whence they flow, must needs be thought intolerable also.

3. Having thus prov'd my assertion, I come now to answer the arguments that are brought on the other side.

*First* then, they say, if the Superior must determin in every doubtful case, the Inferior must often commit most grievous sins. As for instance; if a Man doubt whether *Jehova* or *Baal* be the true God, and the Ruler commanded that *Baal* shou'd be worshipp'd, the Man must renounce the true God. But this is no argument against us; for I have already said, that neither *doubtfulness* nor *ignorance* will excuse an action that is plainly sinful, tho' it be done in obedience to Authority; and I only assert, that the Superior is to over-rule, when we doubt equally, whether an action be lawful or no, and have done our best to satisfy our selves.

Nay,

Nay, this argument concludes as strongly against them, as against us. For if a Man doubt, whether *Jehova* or *Baal* be the true God, and the Ruler commanded, that *Jehovah* only shou'd be worshipp'd; what advice wou'd they give the *doubting* Man? If they say, he must obey the Ruler, they give up the cause; and if he must not obey the Ruler, he must worship *Baal*, and so be guilty of Idolatry.

*Secondly*, They say, that God has commanded us to obey our Superiors, not in all things, but in those things only which are not contrary to his Law. So that when we are uncertain, whether the command be lawful, we are also uncertain, whether we are bound to obey; and therefore it is no more our duty to obey, than to disobey. But I answer, that I have already given many weighty reasons, why we shou'd rather obey than disobey, when we equally doubt whether the command be lawful or no.

But *Thirdly*, The principal argument is drawn from St. Paul's words, *He that doubteth is damn'd, if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*; Rom. 14. 23. From whence they argue, that if it was a sin to eat any food, tho' in it self lawful to be eaten, so long as they doubted whether it was lawful or no; then by parity of reason it must be a sin to do any other action, so long as we doubt of the lawfulness of it; and if so, the Ruler's command will not make it lawful to do it. This is the great argument, and I shall give it a full answer; only I think it needful to premise a general account of the Text it self, before I take off the objection that is drawn from it.

Now St. Paul discourses in this Chapter of the case

case of those *Jewish* Christians, who were *persuaded*, or at least thought it most *probable*, that they were bound to keep *Moses's* Laws concerning the *observation of daies and difference of meats*; whereas other Christians, who were better instructed, made no scruple of eating any kind of Food, tho' forbidden by the Law of *Moses*. If it be said, that the *second verse* intimates their total abstinence from *flesh*, and eating only *herbs*, which *Moses's* Law did not oblige them to; I answer (with some *Fathers*) that they thinking the *Law* still in force, chose to eat only herbs, that their way of living might pass rather for a Religious *abstinence*, than a *legal observance*; and so the other Christians might not reproach them for keeping the *Law*.

As for the word *διανοούμενος*, which we translate *he that doubteth*, it do's as properly signify *he that maketh a difference*; and it is so us'd both in *Scripture* and other *Writers*. And therefore the Text is thus to be rendred, *he that maketh a difference (between meats) is damn'd or condemn'd if he eat (any thing which he judgeth to be unclean) because he eateth not of faith*. This rendring is put in the Margin of our *Bibles*, and is approv'd by most *Latin Expositors*. The word *faith* also in this and the foregoing *verse*, do's not signify, in the large sense, a belief of the Christian Religion, but only a Man's assent to the *lawfulness* of any particular *action*, that he takes in hand. So that to *have faith* about an action, is to be persuaded that it is lawful; and to do an action *not of faith*, is to do that which we have reason to think is unlawful. And whereas St. Paul saith, *he is damn'd if he eat*, we must observe that he do's not mean *damnation* in Hell, but the Condemnation of his  
own

own Conscience, so that the sense is this, *He that maketh a difference between meats, and yet eateth, is condemn'd for it in his own Conscience; because he do's that which he apprehends to be sinful.*

That Man will soon be satisfy'd of the truth of this Interpretation, who considers, that St. Paul had been persuading the stronger Christians, who thought it lawful to eat any sort of food, not to give scandal to the weak Christians, who thought otherwise. And he thus concludes his advice; *Hast thou faith? art thou satisfy'd that it is lawful to eat any sort of food? have it to thy self before God, enjoy thy persuasion; but do not upon every occasion make use of it, least thy weak Brother be embolden'd by thy example to do that, which he thinks to be unlawful.* 'Tis true, *happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth;* happy is he that do's not do what he thinks to be unlawful; *but he that doubteth, that maketh a difference between meats, is damn'd or condemn'd in his Conscience, if he eat what he thinks it is not lawful to eat, because he eateth not of faith, and is not satisfy'd that it is lawful to eat it; for whatsoever is not of faith, whatsoever a Man thinks unlawful, is sin to him that thinks it so.*

Having thus given an account of the Text it self, I am now to consider the objection, which is drawn from it, and which, as I have already said, is this; if it was a sin to eat any food, tho' in it self lawful, so long as a Man doubted, whether it was lawful or no; then by parity of reason it must be a sin to do any other action, so long as we doubt of the lawfulness of it. But I answer, that this Text is nothing to the purpose. For St. Paul here speaks not of a doubting Conscience, but of

of a *Resolv'd Conscience* only. For the Persons he speaks of, were not wavering in their minds; but were persuaded that those meats were unclean, because they thought the Law of *Moses* still in force. This is clear from the 2, 5, and 14 verses of this Chapter; *I know* (saith St. Paul) *and am persuaded, that there is nothing unclean of it self; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

If it be said, that the word *doubteth* is us'd; and that to *doubt* of the unlawfulness of an action, is quite another thing, than to be *persuaded* of it; I answer, that the word may as properly be rendered, *he that maketh a difference* between meats, as *he that doubteth*. But tho' the word *doubteth* be retain'd, yet it is undeniably plain, that St. Paul speaks of a *doubt* strengthen'd with so many *probabilities*, that it wanted but very little of a *persuasion*, or rather it was a *persuasion* with some mixture of *doubtfulness*. If the Man was not fully persuaded that it was a sin to eat, yet he thought it much more probable that it was a sin, than that it was not. For he cou'd not be condemn'd of his own Conscience for eating, if he did not think his eating to be unlawful, and were not in some degree persuaded of it.

Well; but the Apostle saies, v. 5. *One Man esteemeth one day above another, another Man esteemeth every day alike. Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own mind. From whence 'tis plain, that a Man must be persuaded that the action is lawful, else he cannot act with a safe Conscience. And is not that the very same thing that is here said, He that doubteth is condemn'd if he eat, because he eateth not of faith, or with a full persuasion? The Apostle therefore by the former Text directs*

tefts us to interpret this latter in the proper sense of *doubting*.

But I answer, that St. *Paul* did not oblige them to get *full persuasions* in their several ways, for there was too much of that already amongst them; and 'twas nothing to his purpose to tell them, that if they acted without a full *persuasion* of the lawfulness of the action, they sinn'd against Conscience; but his design was to persuade them quietly to permit each other to enjoy their several *persuasions* in those little matters without *censuring* one another. So that the words must be rendred, *Let every one be fill'd with his own mind, or satisfy'd with his own persuasion*. This indeed differs from our *English* Translation: but *Grotius* and the *Vulgar Latin*, as well as St. *Crisostom* and *Theodorit* do thus interpret it; and moreover the matter requires it. For otherwise the precept is neither *reasonable* nor *possible*; since if there appears reason of *doubting*, it is in vain to command a Man not to *doubt*. Nay, it is then as much his duty to *doubt*, as in other cases to *believe*. Thus then it appears, that these words (*he that doubteth, is damn'd if he eat*) do not overthrow my assertion.

But tho' this is a true and substantial answer to the argument, yet I shall give another, which unties the difficulty upon the *Dissenter's* own Principles. Supposing therefore (what is utterly false) that St. *Paul* speaks of a really *doubting* Person, and not of one that is *persuaded*; and that the Man did sin in eating those meats, of the lawfulness of which he doubted; yet it do's not follow, that a Man sins in obeying Authority, where he doubts of the lawfulness of the command. For there is a vast disparity in the Cases; since the Man

Man St. *Paul* speaks of, was at Liberty to forbear eating, and sinn'd in chusing to run a needles hazard of transgressing God's Law ; but when the Superior commands, a Man is not at Liberty. In the former case the Man might forbear without any danger, but in the latter case there is greater danger in forbearing than in acting ; and therefore he is *Bound* to act in the latter case, tho' it might be sin to act in the former.

But further, the reason, why he that *eateth doubtingly*, sins in so doing, is this, *because he eateth not of faith* ; and therefore St. *Paul* do's not say, it is *always* sinful to act in a doubtful case ; because there are some *doubtful* cases, wherein a Man may act with *faith* notwithstanding his *doubt*. For he that is satisfy'd that he acts according to his duty in the present circumstances, do's act with *faith* ; and therefore when a Man is satisfy'd that it is more reasonable, all things consider'd, to do an action than to forbear it, and that it wou'd be sinful in his circumstances to act otherwise ; that Man do's not sin in acting, tho' he act with some kind of *doubt*, because he acts in *faith*, being satisfy'd that he acts according to his duty in his present circumstances. Thus then 'tis plain, that to obey authority in a *purely doubtful* case is not sinful, because a Man may soon be satisfy'd, that it is not only more reasonable, but his duty so to do.

If it be said, that a Man cannot have *faith*, that is, be satisfy'd about an action, and yet *doubt* of it at the same time ; I answer, that the case often happens. A Man has often very great doubts about the lawfulness of an action in general, and yet may be satisfy'd, that considering the circumstances he is in, it may be lawfully done. All doubt-  
ing

ing is not contrary to *faith*. It is sufficient if the *doubts* be over-balanc'd. Tho' a Man's *doubts* be hard and troublesome, yet if he is *persuaded*, that all things consider'd, it is more advisable to do the action, than to forbear it; he has *faith* enough to act with a safe Conscience. Because he acts according to his best judgment, and more than this a Man cannot do.

IV. I am now to speak in the *Fourth* and last place of the *Authority* of a *doubting Conscience*, and to inquire, whether at all, or how far, a Man is obliged by it. I say therefore in general, that a *doubting Conscience* do's not oblige at all. For a *doubting Conscience* is the *suspense* of a Man's judgment about a particular action; he *doubts* whether he be bound to do it or forbear it. Now to suppose that a Man thinks himself *bound* in *Conscience*, while he is disputing whether he is *bound* or no, is to suppose a contradiction. A Man cannot be *bound* in *Conscience* to do or forbear any action, but as he thinks that God's Law has commanded or forbidden it; and therefore he that is doubtful whether it be commanded or forbidden, cannot be *obliged* in *Conscience* either way. There is no particular Law of God, which determines our actions one way or other in the case of a *doubt*; and the general Laws, whether *natural* or *reveal'd*, can oblige us to no more, than to endeavor to understand our duty as well as we can; and when we are at a loss, to act as reasonably as we can. He that do's thus, acts with a *safe Conscience*, tho' he act *doubtfully*.

Having thus largely discuss'd the case of a *doubting Conscience*, I think it will not be amiss to apply what has been said to the Case of our present *Dissenters*. There are several Persons, that are un-



satisfy'd about the lawfulness of our Communion; some upon the Account of *Ceremonies*, others of other things. None of them can say, that these things are *unlawful*; for that is the case of a *resolv'd Conscience*, with which we have nothing here to do: but they are uncertain, whether they be lawful or no; and so long as they thus *doubt*, they dare not join in our worship, fearing they shou'd sin against God in so doing. Of these Persons some have a *single* doubt, that is, they doubt whether they may lawfully join with us, but they are satisfy'd they may Lawfully separate from us: others have a *double* doubt, that is, they doubt whether they may lawfully join with us, and they doubt whether they may lawfully separate from us.

As to the *First* of these sorts, tho' in a *single* doubt it is more safe to chuse that side on which a Man has no doubt, than that on which he doubts; yet this Rule holds only in such cases, where a Man may *forbear* the action without danger of sinning, tho' he cannot *do* it without danger of sinning. But in our case 'tis evident, that as there may be sinning in *Conforming*, so there is certainly danger of sinning in *not Conforming*: Nor is it more safe to separate in case of a *single* doubt, than of a *double* one. For the Man who is satisfy'd in his mind, that he may lawfully cut himself off from the Communion of the Church, and live in constant disobedience to his Superiors (which things are directly contrary to God's Law) must needs be grossly and criminally ignorant of his duty; and therefore his being satisfy'd about such sins will not excuse him; because he was able, and it was his duty to know better.

Nay

Nay further, tho' God had left it indifferent whether we keep the Unity of the Church, and obey our Superiors, or no; tho' the case were really that of a *single* doubt; 'tho there was no danger in forbearing these things, but the only danger was in doing them; yet I say, it is more reasonable to *Conform* than to *Separate* notwithstanding. For tho' in a *single* doubt a Man is to chuse that side on which he has no doubt, rather than that on which he doubts; yet this Rule (as I said before) do's not hold, unless all other considerations be equal. And therefore if a great good may be obtain'd, or a great evil avoided, by acting on the doubtful side, that consideration ought to turn the Balance, and over-rule the doubt; as I shew'd in the Case of going to Law. And certainly, if weighty considerations ought to over-balance a *single* doubt in any case; then the considerations of the *Peace* of the Kingdom, the *Security* of Religion, and those many *Public* and *Private* *Mischiefs* that attend Separation, ought to prevail in this of ours, and oblige Men to *Conform*. And I wish this were well consider'd by our *doubting Dissenters*.

As to the *Second* sort, who doubt both of the lawfulness of *Conforming*, and also of the lawfulness of separating from us; I say *First*, if the *probabilities* appear pretty equal on both sides, then it is their Duty to obey Authority, as I prov'd in the *Third* general Head of this Discourse. *Secondly*, if they think it more probable that they ought not to *Conform*, than that they ought; then, tho' the Authority of Superiors alone have not weight enough to turn the Balance, yet the consideration of the great sin and the more dreadful consequences of separation are sufficient, and

ought to oblige them to *Conform*, as appears from the *Third Prop.* about a *double doubt*, p. 256, 257.

Now let any indifferent Man judge between us and our *Dissenters*. 'Tis plain, that the things they doubt of, are not directly forbidden by God. And if they are forbidden by consequences, those consequences are so obscure, that tho' such usages have ever been in the Christian Church, yet they were never condemn'd as sinful till our daies. And even now these Consequences are not discover'd by our Superiors; no, not by as great and good Divines of all persuasions, as any in the World. Nay, the far greater Number, and those as Pious and Able as any, do plainly own our injunctions to be innocent at least, if not Apostolical. So that if they are all mistaken, it can at most be but a sin of ignorance in an ordinary person, where so many of the best Guides are mistaken, if he shou'd transgress. But now on the other hand, if our Governors be in the right, and our Communion lawful; then how great a sin are they guilty of, in breaking the Laws of *Church Unity*, which are as plain as any in the *Bible*; and that in such instances, where the whole Catholic Church of Old, and the greatest and best part of the present Church, are of a different persuasion from them? The consequences also of their separation are most dreadful; for by it they deprive themselves of the ordinary means of Salvation, and keep up those discords and animosities in the Church, which have torn the bowels of it; and caused *Atheism* and *Profaneness* to overspread it; they affront their Governors, give scandal to all peaceable Persons, and offer a very fair pretense to factious Men to practise against the best of Governments. So they take the most effectual

fectual course to ruin the best Church in the World, and with it the Reform'd Religion in this Kingdom. And now let any Man judge, whether any doubt about the lawfulness of our Communion, and all the probabilities of the doubt, have weight enough to balance against such a sin and such consequences. Certainly an unconcern'd Person will pronounce, that in such a Case a Man is bound to Conform, rather than to Separate ; and that is all I contend for.

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### C H A P. XIII.

#### *The pretense of a Scrupulous Conscience, Answer'd.*

**I** Proceed now to the pretense of a *Scrupulous Conscience*; in Treating of which I shall,

1. *Shew what I mean by it.* 2. *Observe some few things concerning it.* 3. *Offer some plain Rules and Means, by which we may best get rid of it.*

First then, Conscience is a Man's judgment concerning the Goodness or Evil of his Actions ; and a *Scrupulous Conscience* is a *Scrupulous* judgment concerning things in their own nature indifferent ; and consists either, 1. in strictly tying up our selves to some things, which God has no where commanded ; as the *Pharisees* made great Conscience of washing before meat, &c. and observ'd such usages as Religiously, as the most indisputable commands of God : or, 2. in a conscientious abstaining from some things, which are no waies unlawful ; doubting and fearing where no fear is ; thinking that God is as much offended by our

eating some kind of Meats, or wearing some Garments, as by Adultery or Murder; and being more precise about little matters, than other Good Christians are, or our selves ought to be.

*Secondly*, Concerning this *Scrupulous Conscience* we may observe, 1. that it is a sickly temper of Mind, and a state of Infirmary, arising from a Want of a right understanding our Religion, from Timorousness, Melancholy, and Prejudice. Now this is no more a Virtue or commendable Quality in us, than 'tis to be sickly and often indispos'd. A good Conscience is firm and steady, well settled and resolv'd: but such needless scruples are at the best a sign of an ungovern'd fancy and a weak judgment; just as the Niceness and Squeamishness of a Man's stomach, that distasts Wholesome Food, is a symptom of an unsound and unhealthy Body.

2. 'Tis often a sign of Hypocrisy; as 'twas in the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who strain'd at a Gnat and swallow'd a Camel, and hoped to make amends for their gross transgressions in other cases of far greater Weight and Moment, by their curiosity about some external Observances. They therefore who are so *Scrupulous* about little indifferent matters, ought to approve their Honesty and Sincerity by the most exact diligence in the practice of all other Duties of Religion, which are plainly and undoubtedly such. They who pretend to such a tender Conscience above other Men, must know, that the World will watch them as to the fairness and justice of their *Dealings*, the calmness of their Tempers, their Behavior in their several Relations, their Modesty, Humility, Charity, Peaceableness, and the like. If in all these things they keep the same Tenor, use the same caution and circumspection, and be uniformly conscientious;

Scientious; then it must be acknowledg'd, that it is only Weakness or Ignorance that raiseth their Scruples, and not any vicious Principle; and the condition of those who are under the power of such scruples, is much to be pity'd. But when I see a Man scrupling praying by a Book or Form, and yet living without any sense of God, or fear of him; afraid of a Ceremony in God's Worship, and not afraid of a plain damnable Sin, of Covetousness, rash censuring his Brethren, of Hatred and Strife, Faction and Schism, and Disobedience to Superiors; when I see one that out of Conscience refuseth to kneel at the Sacrament, and yet dares totally neglect the Communion; who takes great care not to give offence to his weak Brother, but can freely speak evil of Dignities, and despise his lawful Governors; it is not then uncharitable to say, That it is not a fear of offending God, but some other End or Interest, that acts and moves him: and that in pleading the Tenderness of his Conscience he is no other than a downright Hypocrite. 3. 'Tis excessive troublesome and vexatious. It robs a Man of that Peace and Satisfaction, which he might otherwise find in Religion, and makes his Condition continually uneasy and restless. 4. Its scruples are infinite and endless; for there is hardly any thing to be done, but some small exceptions may be started against it. Scrupulous Men go on from one Thing to another, till at Length they Scruple every thing. This is notorious amongst us; for those who have taken Offence at some things in our Church, and have thereupon separated from us, and associated themselves with a purer Congregation, have soon disliked something amongst them also; and then they

they wou'd reform themselves farther, and after they refine themselves more still, till at last they have sunk down either into *Quakerism*, *Popery*, or *Atheism*. 5. This needless scrupling has done unspeakable mischiefs to the Church of Christ, especially to the Reform'd Church of *England*. In the great and necessary Truths of Religion we all profess to be agreed. We all worship the same God, believe in the same Lord and Savior, have the same Baptism, the same Faith, the same Hope, the same common Interest: our Sacraments, as to the main, are rightly administred according to our Savior's Institution; our Churches are acknowledg'd to be true Churches of Jesus Christ; but there are some Constitutions which chiefly respect outward Order, and the decent Performance of Divine Worship, against which Men have receiv'd strange Prejudices, on the account of them have rais'd a mighty noise and clamor against the Church, and have openly separated from her Communion; as if by renouncing of *Popery* we had only exchanged one idolatrous Service for another. About these Skirts and Borders, the dress and circumstances of Religion, has been all our quarrelling and contention; and these Differences have proceeded to such an height, as to beget immortal Feuds and Animosities, to break and crumble us into little Parties and Factions; whereby mutual Edification is hinder'd, our common Religion suffers Reproach, the Enemies of it are strengthen'd and encourag'd, public Peace endanger'd, and brotherly Love, the Badge of Christ's Disciples, quite lost amongst us; and the continuance of these miserable Distractions amongst us upon such frivolous Accounts, is a matter of sad consideration, and forebodes great Evils

vils in Church and State. I doubt not to say, that the Devil has fought more successfullly against Religion under the Mask of a zealous Reformer, than under any other disguise whatever.

*Thirdly*, I shall offer some plain Rules and Means, by which we may best get rid of a *Scrupulous Conscience*.

I. We shou'd endeavor to have the most Honorable thoughts of God ; for accordingly as we Conceive of His Nature, so shall we judge what Things are most Pleasing or most Offensive to Him. Now consider, I pray ; Do's not God principally Regard the Frame of our Minds in Prayer? or will He refuse to hear us, because He dislikes the Garment of the Minister? Do's God regard any particular Gestures or Habits, which are neither Dishonorable to Him, nor Unsuitable to the Nature of the Religious performance, so far, as that the acceptance of our Worship shou'd depend upon such Circumstances? To surmise any such Thing is surely to Dishonor God, as if he were a low, poor, humorsome Being ; like a Father that shou'd disinherit his Dutiful Child, only because he did not like his Complexion, or the Colour of his Hair. The Wiser and Greater any Person is, to whom we address our selves, the less he will stand upon little Punctilioes.

Mean Thoughts of God are the true ground of all Superstition, when we think to court and please him by making great Conscience about little things ; and so it has been truly observ'd, that there is far more Superstition in conscientious abstaining from that which God has no where forbidden, than there is in doing that which God has not commanded. A Man may certainly do what God has not commanded, and yet never think to flatter



flatter God by it, nor place any Religion in it; but he may do it only out of obedience to his Superiors, for outward Order and Decency, for which end our Ceremonies are appointed; and so there is no Superstition in them. But now a Man cannot out of Conscience refuse to do what God has not forbidden, and is by lawful Authority requir'd of him; but he must think to please God by such abstaining: and in this conceit of pleasing or humoring God by indifferent things, consists the true Spirit of Superstition.

2. We shou'd lay out our Great Care and Zeal about the Necessary and Essential Duties of Religion: and this will make us less Concern'd about Things of an Indifferent and Inferior Nature. St. Paul saies; *Rom. 14. 17. The Kingdom of God is not Meat nor Drink, but Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* What needs all this stir and bustle? this censuring, disputing and dividing, about Standing or Kneeling? These are not the great matters of our Faith; they are not worth so much Noise and Contention. The great stress and weight in our Religion is laid upon the Duties of a Righteous and Holy Life, and a Peaceable Spirit and Conversation; For, saies St Paul, *ver. 18. he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approv'd of men.* He that minds those things most, on which the Efficacy of his Prayers for Christ's sake do's Depend, will not need new Phrases every time to raise his Affections; and the more a Man is concern'd about the Necessary Preparation for the Sacrament, the less afraid will he be of offending God by Kneeling at it. For he will find, that True Religion consists in the Constant Practice of Holiness, Righteousness and Charity; which make

a Man really Better, and more like to God.

3. If Men were but really Willing to receive satisfaction, this alone wou'd half conquer their Scruples: but when they are fond of them, and nourish them, and will neither hear nor read what is to be said on the other side; there can be but Little Hopes of recovering them to a Right Apprehension of things. Wou'd they come once to distrust their own Judgments, to suppose that they may perhaps be all this while mistaken; wou'd they calmly and patiently hear, faithfully and impartially consider, what is said or written against them; as eagerly seek for satisfaction, as Men do for the cure of any Disease they are subject unto; wou'd they, I say, thus diligently use all fit means and helps for the removal of their Scruples, before they troubled the Church with them; it wou'd not prove so very difficult a Task to convince and settle such teachable Minds. When they have any Fear or Suspicion about their Worldly concerns, they presently repair to those who are best skill'd, and most able to resolve them; and in their judgment and determination they commonly acquiesce and satisfy themselves. Has any Man a scruple about his Estate, whether it be firmly settled, or he has a true legal Title to it? The way he takes for satisfaction is to advise with Lawyers, the most eminent for Knowledge and Honesty in their Profession. If they agree in the same Opinion, this is the greatest assurance he can have, that it is right and safe. Thus is it with one that doubts whether such a Custom or practice be for his Health: the opinion of known and experienc'd Physicians is the only proper means to determine him in such a Case. The reason is the same

same here. When any private Person is troubled and perplex'd with Fears and Scruples, concerning the Duty or the Worship of God; he ought in the first place to have recourse to the public Guides and Ministers of Religion, who are appointed by God, and are best fitted to direct and conduct him; I say, to come to them, not only to dispute with them, and perty to oppose them; but with modesty to propound his doubts, and meekly to receive Instruction, humbly begging of God to open his Understanding, that he may see and embrace the truth, taking great care that no bad affection, love of a Party, or carnal Interest byass his Judgment.

I do not by this desire Men to pin their Faith upon the Priest's Sleeve; but only diligently to attend to their Reason and Arguments, and to give some due Regard to their Authority. For 'tis not so Absurd, as some may Imagin, for the Common People to take upon Trust from their Lawful Teachers, what they are not Competent Judges of themselves. But the difficulty is, how a private Christian shall govern himself, when the very Ministers of Religion disagree. By what Rule shall he chuse his Guide? I answer, 1. If a Man be tolerably able to judge for himself; let him impartially hear both sides, and think it no Shame to Change his Mind, when he sees good Reason for it. Cou'd we thus prevail with the People diligently to examin the Merits of the cause, our Church wou'd every day gain more Ground amongst all wise Men. For we care not how much Knowledge and Understanding our People have, so they be but humble and modest with it; nor do we desire Men to become our Prose-

lytes

lytes any further, than we give them good *Scripture* and Reason for it. 2. As for those who are not capable of Judging, they had better depend on those Ministers, who are Regularly and by the Laws of the Land set over them; than on any other Teachers, that they can chuse for themselves.

I speak now of these present Controversies about Forms and Ceremonies, which are above the Sphere of common People; not of such things as concern the Salvation of all Men, which are plain and evident to the meanest Capacities. When therefore in such Cases, about which we cannot easily satisfy our selves, we follow the Advice of the Authoriz'd Guides; if they chance to mislead us, we have something to say for our selves; our error is more *Excusable*, as being occasion'd by those, whose Judgment God commands us to respect: but when we chuse Instructors according to our own Fancies, if we then prove to be in the wrong, and are betray'd into sin; we may thank our Wantonness for it, and are more severely Accountable for such mistakes. Thus if a Sick Person shou'd miscarry under a Licens'd Physician; he has this contentment, that he us'd the wisest means for Recovery: but if he will hearken only to *Quacks*, and then grow worse and worse; he must charge his own Folly as the Cause of his Ruin.

4. We shou'd thoroughly consider, what is the true Notion of *Lawful*; and how it differs from what is *Necessary*, and from what is *Sinful*. That is necessary, or our Duty, which God has expressly injoin'd; that is sinful, which God has forbidden; that is lawful, which is not by any Law obliging us, either commanded or forbidden.

For

For *Where there is no Law*, saith the Apostle, *there is no transgression*, Rom. 4. 15. There can be no Transgression, but either omitting what the Law commands, or doing what the Law forbids. For instance, if any Man can shew where Kneeling at the Sacrament is forbidden in *Scripture*, and Sitting is requir'd; Where Praying by a Form is forbidden, and *Extempore* Prayers are injoin'd; then indeed the Dispute wou'd soon be at an end: but if neither the one nor the other can be found, as most certainly they cannot, then Kneeling at the Sacrament, and reading Prayers out of a Book, must be reckon'd amongst things lawful. And then there is no need of scrupling them, because they may be done without Sin. Nay, where they are requir'd by our Superiors, it is our Duty to submit to them, because it is our Duty to obey them in all lawful things. This way of arguing is very plain and convincing, and cannot be evaded, but by giving another notion of *lawful*. And therefore it is commonly said, that nothing is lawful, especially in the Worship of God, which God himself has not prescrib'd and appointed, or that has been abus'd to evil Purposes; but having fully confuted these two Mistakes in the *Second* and *Eight* Chapters, I shall pass them over here.

5. I desire those who Scruple to comply with our Church, to consider, that there never was, nor ever will be, any public Constitution, that will be every way unexceptionable. The best Policy, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, that can be Establish'd, will have some flaws and defects, which must be born and tolerated. Some Inconveniences will in process of time arise that never cou'd be foreseen or provided against; and to make alteration upon every emergent difficulty,  
may

may be often of worse consequence; than the evil we pretend to cure by it. Let the Rules, and Modes of Government, Disciplin, and public Worship, be most exact and blameless; yet there will be faults in Governors and Ministers, as long as they are but Men. We must not expect in this World a Church without spot or wrinkle, that consists only of *Saints*, in which nothing can be found amiss; especially by those who lie at the catch and wait for an advantage against it. Men must be willing, if ever they wou'd promote Peace and Unity, to put candid Constructions and Favorable Interpretations upon Things; and not strain them on purpose, that they may raise more considerable Objections against them.

6. If these and the like Considerations will not conquer a Man's Scruples; then let him lay them aside, and act against them. But here I easily imagin some ready presently to ask me, Do you persuade us to Conform to the Orders of the Church, tho' we are not satisfy'd in our Minds concerning them? I answer, That I think this is the *best* Advice that can be given to such Scrupulous Persons. It wou'd be an endless thing, and Communion with any Church wou'd be altogether unpracticable, if every private *Christian* was obliged to suspend joining himself to it, till he was perfectly satisfy'd about the reasonableness and expediency of all that was requir'd, or was in use in that Church. For indeed, private Persons are by no means proper Judges of what is fit and convenient in the Administration of Church Government, Disciplin, or public Worship, any more than they are of matters of State, or the Reasonableness of all Civil Laws. Things of a Public Nature belong to Superiors; and if  
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they appoint what is Indecent or Inconvenient, they only are accountable for it ; but 'tis not the fault of Inferiors, who join with such Worship, or yield to such Injunctions (not plainly sinful) for the sake of Peace and Order.

I do not by this encourage Men to venture blindfold on Sin, or to neglect any reasonable care of their Actions ; but if People raise all the Difficulties and Objections they can start, before they proceed to a Resolution about things that have no manifest Impiety in them, nor are plainly, nor by any easy consequence, contrary to the reveal'd Will of God ; this cannot but occasion infinite perplexity and trouble to Mens Minds, and there are but few things they shall be able to do with a safe and quiet Conscience. Before we separate from a Church, or refuse to comply with its Orders, we ought to be fully satisfy'd and persuaded, that what is requir'd, is forbidden by God ; because by leaving the Communion of any Church, we pass Sentence upon it and condemn it ; which ought not to be done upon light and doubtful Causes. But there is not the same necessity, that we shou'd be thus fully satisfy'd about our conformity to all things prescrib'd by the Church. We may presume them to be innocent, unless they plainly appear to us otherwise. If any one think, that this Principle will introduce *Popery*, and make People without any Examination submit to every thing, which their Superiors please to impose upon them ; let him only consider, that there are many things in *Popery*, which God has manifestly forbidden, which render our Separation from it *necessary* : whereas ours are at the worst only doubtful, or rather not so good as might be devis'd ; and  
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this surely makes a wide Difference in the Case.

But do's not St Paul say, *Rom. 14. 14. I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing Unclean of it self; but to him that esteemeth any thing Unclean, it is Unclean?* Do's he not say, *He that doubteth, is damn'd if he eat, v. 23. and that whatsoever is not of faith, is sin?* I answer, Yes. But then, when I speak of a *Scrupulous Conscience*, I suppose the Person tolerably well persuaded of the Lawfulness of what is to be done: but yet he has some little Exceptions against it; he do's not think it *best and fittest*, all things consider'd. This is properly a *Scruple*; and is certainly the case of all those, who do sometimes join in our worship; which they cou'd not do, did they judge it absolutely sinful. So that, tho' it shou'd be granted that a Man cannot innocently do that, of which his Conscience doubts, whether it be Lawful or no, which case I have discours'd of in the foregoing *Chapter*: yet a Man may, and in some cases is bound to do that, which is not Unlawful, tho' upon some other accounts he *Scruples* the doing of it. Now, if we have no very Weighty Reason for the doing of them; then it may be the safest way to forbear all such things, as we scruple at. Of such Cases the Apostle speaks in the fore-mentioned places of eating or not eating some Meats; neither of them was required by Law. Eating was no Instance of Duty, nor was it any waies forbid Christians. Where to do or not to do is perfectly at our own choice, it is best for a Man to forbear doing that which he has some suspicion of, tho' he be not sure that it is sinful. As suppose a Man have Scruples in his Mind about playing at Cards and Dice, or going to see Stage-plays, or putting out his Money to

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Usury;



Usury ; because there is no great Reason or Necessity for any of these things, and to be sure they may be innocently forborn, without any detriment to our selves or others ; tho' we do not judge them absolutely sinful, yet it is safest for him who cannot satisfy himself concerning the Goodness and Fitness of them, wholly to deny himself the use of them. But in these two cases it is *most for the quiet of our Consciences, to act against, or notwithstanding our Fears and Scruples, when either our Superiors, to whom we owe Obedience, have interpos'd their Commands, or when by it we prevent some great Evil or Mischief.*

1. All Fears and Scruples only about the *Convenience and Expediency* of things, ought to be despis'd, when they come in Competition with the Duty of Obedience. Wou'd Men but think themselves in Conscience bound to pay the same Duty and Respect to the Judgment and Authority of their lawful Governors, whether in Church or State, as they do expect their Servants and Children shou'd to themselves ; they wou'd soon see the reasonableness of such Submissions. For all Government and Subjection wou'd be very precarious and arbitrary, if every one that did not approve of a Law, or was not fully satisfy'd about the expediency of it, were thereby excepted from all Obligations to obey it. This is to give the Supreme Authority to the most humorfome or perverse sort of people ; for, according to this Principle, no public Laws and Constitutions can be valid and binding, unless every scrupulous, tho' a very ignorant Conscience, consent to them.

2. We are not to mind or stand upon our Scruples, when they will probably cause a great Evil,

Evil, or general Mischief. We must not put them in the balance with the Peace of the Church and Unity of Christians. Suppose for once, that our public way of Worship is not the best that can be devis'd ; that many things might be amended in our *Liturgy* ; that we cou'd invent a more agreeable Constitution than this present is (which yet no Man in the World can ever tell ; for we cannot know all the Inconveniences of any alteration, till it comes to be try'd) yet granting all this, it cannot be thought so intolerable an Evil, as contempt of God's public Worship, dividing into Sects and Parties, living in Debate, Contention, and Separation from one another. If there be some few things amongst us not wisely chosen or determin'd, some Ceremonies against which just Exceptions may be made ; yet to forsake the Communion of such a true Church of Jesus Christ, and set up a distinct Altar in opposition to it, to combine and associate into separate Congregations, is (as a certain Person speaks) *like knocking a Man on the Head, because his Teeth are rotten, or his Nails too long*. How much more agreeable is it to the Christian Temper, to be willing to sacrifice all Doubts and Scruples to the Interest of public Order and Divine Charity ? For better surely it is to serve God in a defective manner, to bear any Disorders and Faults ; than to break the Bond of Peace and Brotherly Communion.

## C H A P. XIV.

*The Pretense of Scandal, or giving Offence  
to Weak Brethren, Answer'd*

**B**UT there are some, who tell us, that they are indeed themselves sufficiently persuaded of the lawfulness of all that is injoin'd by the Church of *England*; but then there are many other godly, but weaker Christians of another persuasion, with whom they have long been join'd. And shou'd they now totally forsake them and Conform; they shou'd thereby give great offence to all those tender Consciences, which are not thus convinced of the lawfulness of holding Communion with our Church. Which sin, say they, is so very great, that our Savior tells us, *Matth. 18. 6. Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill stone were hang'd about his neck, and that he were drown'd in the depth of the sea: and in St. Paul's account 'tis no less than spiritual murder, a destroying him for whom Christ dy'd, Rom. 14. 15.*

These Persons I design to answer in this Chapter, by shewing that No private Christian (as the case now stands amongst us) is obliged to absent himself from his Parish Church for fear of offending or Scandalizing his weak Brethren. And this I shall do by inquiring, 1. *What is the true Notion of a Weak Brother.* 2. *What it is to offend such an one.* 3. *How far; and in what instances, we are bound to consider the Weakness of our Brother.*

1. Then, a Weak Brother or weak in Faith in Scripture

Scripture language denotes one newly converted to Christianity; and so neither thoroughly instructed in the Principles, nor well settled in the practise of it; the same whom our Savior calls a *little one*, Matt. 18. 6. and the *Apostle a Babe in Christ*, 1 Cor. 3. 1. Conversion to Christianity is call'd our New-birth; and the Converts were for a while reckon'd as in an infant State: and accordingly were to be most gently us'd, till by degrees, by the improvement of their knowledge, they came to be of *full Age*, Heb. 5. 14. They were at first to be fed with Milk, to be taught the easiest and plainest Doctrines, and great Prudence and Caution was to be us'd towards them; lest they shou'd suddenly fly back and repent of their change. For they having been *Jews and Gentiles*, retain'd still a great Love for many of their Old Customs and Opinions; they had mighty and inveterate prejudices to overcome; the Old Man was by degrees to be put off; and therefore they were at first treated with all the tenderness and condescension imaginable. The stronger and wiser Christians wou'd not stand rigidly on any little Matters, but Tolerate many things, which were necessary afterwards to be done away; hoping that in time they might be brought off those mistakes they now labor'd under. Hence I observe,

1. That the Rules, which are laid down in Scripture concerning *Weak Brethren*, are not standing Laws equally obliging all Christians in all Ages; but were suited to the Infant-state of the Church, till Christianity had gotten firm footing in the World. The Apostle's design in all his compliances, was to win many to Christ; 1 Cor. 9. 19. Now to do as St. Paul did, wou'd alwaies be the Duty and Wisdom of one in his circumstances.

cas, who was to spread Christianity amongst Heathens and Infidels : but his Directions and Practice do no more agree with our Times, wherein Christianity is the National Religion ; than the same Cloaths which we did wear in our Infancy, wou'd serve us now at our full Age. We ought indeed to remove every Straw out of Childrens way, lest they stumble and fall ; but 'tis ridiculous to use the same care towards grown Men. There is not now amongst us any such competition between two Religions : but every one learns Christianity as he do's his Mother Tongue. *St. Paul* wou'd not take the Reward that was due to him for Preaching the Gospel, but himself labor'd hard night and day, because he wou'd not be chargeable to his Converts, *1 Thess.* 2. 9. and this he did for the furtherance of the Gospel, that all might see he did not serve his own Belly : but surely our *Dissenters* do not think themselves obliged by this Example, in places where public maintenance is settled on Ministers by Law, to refuse to take it, and earn their own Bread by some manual Occupation ; tho' thereby they avoid giving Offence to *Quakers*, and those who call them Hirelings, and say they prophesy only for filthy lucre, In short, there are no such *Weak* Persons now among us, as those were for whom the Apostle provides ; or as those *little ones* were, for whom our Savior was so much concern'd.

2. The *Dissenters*, according to their weak opinion of themselves, are of all Men the farthest off from being *Weak Christians* in any sense. They who take upon themselves to be Teachers of others, wiser and better than their Neighbors, the only sober and godly Party, and are too apt

to despise all other Christians as ignorant or profane ; with what color of Reason can they plead for any favor to be shewn, or regard to be had to them, in compliance with their *weakness* ? Tho' they love to argue against us from the Example of St. Paul's condescension to the ignorant *Jews* or *Gentiles* ; yet it is apparent that they do not in other Cases willingly liken themselves to those *weak Believers*, or *Babes in Christ*. They have really better thoughts of themselves, and wou'd be Leaders and Masters in *Israel*, and prescribe to their Governors, and give Laws to all others, and prefer their own private Opinion (which they call their *Conscience*) before the Judgment of the wisest Men, or the Determinations of their lawful Superiors. And if in all Instances we shou'd deal with them as *weak* Persons, turn them back to their *Primmer*, advise them to learn their *Catechism* ; they wou'd think themselves highly wrong'd and injur'd. But the truth is, they ordinarily look upon their Opposition to the Orders of our Church, as the Effect of an higher Illumination, a greater Knowledge, than others have attain'd unto. They rather count us the *weak* Christians, if some of them will allow us so much ; for otherwise, if they do not take us for the weaker and worse Christians, why do they separate from us ? Why do they associate and combine together into distinct Congregations, as being purer, more select Christians than others ? Now, tho' such Persons as these may be in truth very *weak*, of little Judgment or Goodness, notwithstanding this Conceit of themselves and their Party ; yet these are not by any means to plead for Indulgence under that Character, nor to expect we shou'd forego our Liberty, to please and humor them.

3. Those who are really *weak*, that is, ignorant and injudicious, are to be born withal only for a time, till they have receiv'd better instruction: but we cannot be alwaies *Babes in Christ*, without our own gross fault and neglect. Such as will not yield to the clearest reason, if it be against their Interest or their Party, can upon no account claim the priviledges of Weak Persons. Of these our Savior had no regard, who were so unreasonable and obstinate in their opposition, *Matth.* 23. 14.

Not that I wou'd be so uncharitable, as to condemn all, or the generality of *Dissenters*, for being Malicious and wilful in their dissent from us; but however, 1. I beg them to examin, whether they have sincerely endeavor'd to satisfy themselves, and have devoutly pray'd to God to free their minds from prejudices and corrupt affections; for otherwise their *Weakness* is no more to be pity'd, than that Man's sickness, who will not, tho' he may be cur'd. 2. I must say, that old and inveterate Mistakes, that have been a 1000 times answer'd and protested against, are not much to be heeded by us. If People will by no means be prevail'd upon to lay aside their fanesies, they do not deserve that compassion, which St. *Paul* prescribes towards *Weak Brethren*. In matters of a doubtful or suspicious nature, that are capable of being misunderstood and abus'd, yet if there be no Moral evil in them, and the doing of them is of some considerable consequence to me; I am bound to forbear them no longer, than till I have endeavor'd to inform them rightly concerning the innocency of my action and intencion, and given them notice of the evil, that might possibly happen to them. If I dig a pit or lay a  
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block in the way, whereby others not knowing any thing of it, are hurt and wounded; I am guilty of causing them to fall: but if they are plainly and often told of it, and yet will run into the danger; they are then only to thank themselves. Now, if it be thus in Cases that are liable to suspicion and misinterpretation; it holds much more in the Orders of our Church, where the Offence arises not so much from the Nature of the Injunctions, as from Mens gross ignorance, mis-conceit, or perverseness. This shall suffice to shew, what is the true Notion of a *Weak Brother*.

II. I am now to shew, *what it is to offend such an one*. People are generally mistaken about the sense of *offending* or *giving offence*. For by it they commonly understand displeasing or grieving another, and making him angry with them; and so they think themselves bound in Conscience to forbear all those things, which *Godly* Persons do not like or approve of, or are contrary to their Fancy or Judgment. 'Tis true, there is one place, that seems to favor this conceit; *Rom. 14. 15. If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably*. But it must be observ'd, that by *grieving* our Brother, is not meant displeasing, but wounding and hurting him: and so it is us'd to denote that which causeth Grief or Sorrow; and is the same with *destroying*, and *putting a Stumbling-block or an occasion to fall*, v. 13, 15, 21. To be *offended* or *griev'd*, is not to be troubl'd at what another has done out of pity and concern for his Soul; but to receive hurt our selves from it, being drawn or deceiv'd into some sin by it.

But because many well-dispos'd People do think, that they must not do any thing, which good  
Men



Men are disp'eas'd or griev'd at, I desire them to consider a few things. 1. That to censure and condemn, and be displeas'd with the actions of those that differ from them, or refuse to join any longer with them in their separate Congregations, is a great instance of peevishness and uncharitableness; and is that very sin which *St. Paul* often warns his Weak Believers against, viz. that they shou'd not rashly judge those, who understood their Christian Liberty better than themselves. At this rate any company of Men, that shall resolve to quarrel with all that do not do as they do, must oblige all to remain for ever with them, for fear of giving them offence. If what I do, is not evil in it self; it cannot become such, because another Man is causlessly angry with me for doing of it. 2. They that pretend, that this fear of offending, that is, displeasing their *Weak Brethren*, hinders their compliance with the Church, ought seriously to examin themselves, whether it is not really only the care of their credit and reputation with that Party, or else the securing of some worldly Interest, that keeps them from Conformity. 3. If to displease our *Weak Brethren* were the sinful offending him condemn'd by *St. Paul*; it wou'd prove an intolerable yoke upon Mens Consciences, and beget such endless perplexities, that we shou'd not be able to do any thing, tho' never so indifferent, with a well-*as-*sur'd mind; since one or other will in this sense be scandaliz'd at it. We shall anger some by doing, others by forbearing: and since those, who call themselves *weak*, are divided into several factions, each condemning all the other; 'tis impossible for us to comply with any one of them, but we shall thereby displease all the rest. 4. If

we do nothing which may displease our *Weak Brethren*; we do submit our Judgment and Consciences to the conduct of the most ignorant and injudicious Christians: and yield them that Authority over us, which we deny to our lawful Superiors. And 'tis strange, that those who think their Christian Liberty so much violated by the determinations of their Superiors about indifferent matters, shou'd yet suffer themselves to be thus ty'd up by the passions of their *Weak Brethren*. Whatever condescension may be due to the *Weak*, yet 'twas never intended they shou'd govern the Wiser: and who can govern more absolutely than those, whom none must displease?

Since then *Scandalizing* or *giving offence* do's not signify doing something which another takes ill, I design to shew what is the true meaning of it in *Scripture*. The *Greek* word which we translate *Scandal* or *Offence*, signifies either a Trap or Snare, or else more commonly something laid in the way of another, which occasions his stumbling or falling, by which he is bruis'd and hurt. And so, whatever it was that hindred Men from becoming Christ's Disciples, or made them entertain unworthy thoughts of their profession, or discouraged them in it, or tempted them to forsake it, is call'd a *Scandal* or *Offence*. It is sometimes rendered an *occasion to fall*, Rom. 14. 13. *occasion of stumbling*, 1 Johu 2. 10. *a stumbling block*, Rev. 2. 14. or *a thing that doth offend*, Matth. 13. 41. in all which places there is the same original Word. Hence to *Offend* or *Scandalize* any one, as 'tis commonly us'd in the (a) *New Testament*, is to

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(a) See *Matth.* 17. 27. and 26. 31. *Mark* 4. 17. and 6. 3. *Job*, 6. 61. & *Cor.* 1. 23.

do something which tends to fright him from Christianity, to make him think hardly of it, or is apt to make him repent of his Conversation. So that in the most general sense, to *Scandalize* or *Offend* any one, is to give occasion to his sin, and consequently his Ruin and undoing; and this I suppose will be granted by all, that do not receive their opinions from the mere sound of words. Hence I observe *Four* things.

1. The better Men are, the harder 'tis to *Scandalize* them. Those are not such *Godly* Persons, as they wou'd be thought, who are so ready at all turns to be Offended. For how can they excel others in knowledge or Goodness, who are so easily drawn or tempted to sin?

2. That Man, that saies he shall be *Scandalized* at what another Man do's, speaks falsely. For it is as much as to say, that he shall be led into sin *ignorantly*: whereas his saying so confutes his Ignorance; for if he knows it to be a sin, he commits it wilfully.

3. Since *Offending* or *Scandalizing* signifies tempting to sin, there can be no fear of *Offending* any one by Conforming to the Church; because there is nothing us'd in it, but what may be comply'd with without sin. For the Man that fears *giving Offence to the Weak*, is suppos'd to be satisfy'd himself, that Conformity is lawful; and how then shou'd he fear, that his example will tempt others to sin in doing an innocent action? If it be said, that tho' what I do is lawful, yet it may give occasion to others to do something else that is unlawful, and so I may become truly guilty of *giving Offence*; I answer, that we are accountable only for the Natural tendencies of our actions, and not for such consequences, as wicked or silly Men may

may draw from them; for at that rate a Man cou'd not speak or do any thing without the guilt of *giving Scandal*. If it be said, that tho' I am satisfy'd my self, yet I may by my example tempt others that are not satisfy'd, or that think Conformity to be sinful, to follow me with a doubting or gainfaying Conscience; I answer, 1. that 'tis as unlawful to go to separate Meetings against one's Conscience, as to Conform against one's Conscience: and the Man ought to fear lest he draw some to separate Meetings against their Conscience, as well as he fears the drawing of others to Church against their Conscience. The influence of his example is the same in both instances, and the danger of Scandal is equal; and therefore his own persuation must determin his practice.

2. A Man that is satisfy'd himself ought to endeavor to satisfy others, especially those whom he formerly perswaded to separation by his example, and when he has done thus, he has done what lies in his Power to prevent the ill effect, and shall not be farther answerable for the Consequences of what he doth.

4. Since *Scandalizing* is leading into sin, we may *Scandalize* others as soon by complying with them, as by thwarting their humor. St. Paul, who circumcis'd *Timothy*, *Acts* 16. 3. in favor of the *Weak Jews*, lest they should have forsaken the Faith; refus'd to circumcise *Titus*, *Gal.* 2. 3. (tho' he angered the *Jews* by it) lest they should think the *Jewish* Law still in force. And this he did, because the condition of the Persons was different. If he had pleas'd them, he had truly *Scandaliz'd* them by hardning them in their folly and ignorance. Mr. Baxter saies (in his *Cure of Church Division*) *Many a time I have the rather*  
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gone to the Common Prayers of the public Assemblies, for fear of being a Scandal to those same Men, that call'd the going to them a Scandal; that is, for fear of hardening them in a sinful Separation and Error. Because I knew, that was not Scandal which they call'd Scandal; that is, displeasing them, and crossing their opinions; but hardening them in an Error or other Sin, is true Scandalizing. Understand this, or you will displease God under pretense of avoiding Scandal, p. 135. This surely ought to be well consider'd of by a sort of Men amongst us, who shall go to Church in the Morning, and to a Conventicle in the Afternoon; who halt between both, and wou'd fain displease neither side, but indeed give real Offence to both. From all this, I think, it is very plain, that he, who is satisfy'd in his own mind of the lawfulness of Conformity, but is afraid of giving Offence by it, if he be true to his Principle, ought to hasten the faster to his Parish Church, that he may not offend those *very Dissenters*, of whom he wou'd seem to be so tender.

III. In the last place I am to inquire, how far, and in what instances, we are bound to consider the Weakness of our Brethren. In answer to this I shall now suppose, notwithstanding all I have already said, that the *Dissenters* are truly weak Persons, and that there might be some danger of their being, thro' their own fault, *Offended* by our Conformity; yet taking this for granted, I shall plainly shew, that he who is in his own mind convinc'd of the lawfulness of Conformity, ought not to forbear it for fear of giving such Offence to his Weak Brethren. For,

*First*, Nothing that is sinful may be done to avoid others being *Scandaliz'd*. *We must not do evil, that*

that good may come, Rom. 3. 8. We must not commit the least sin our selves, to prevent the greatest sin in another. The very best things may be perverted, and Christ himself is said to be *set for the fall of many*, Luke 2. 34. but this do's not cancel our obligations to obey God's Laws. If offence be taken at my doing any duty, those only that are *offended* are chargeable with it. Since those who fear *giving Offence*, do themselves think Conformity lawful; and since Conformity is injoin'd; and since nothing is more plain from *Scripture*, than that we must obey our Superiors in all lawful things; therefore it's evident that we must not omit the duty of Conforming for fear of *giving Offence*.

But 'tis Objected, that those Precepts which contain only Rituals, are to give place to those which concern the welfare of Mens Bodies, and much more to those which concern the welfare of their Souls: so that when both together cannot be observ'd, we must break the former to observe the latter. *God will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. Now if Sacrifices prescrib'd by God himself, must give place to Acts of Mercy, much more must *Human Inventions* yield to them. To this I answer, that the commands of our Superiors do not bind us either in a case of absolute necessity, or when they plainly hinder any moral duty to God or our Neighbor: but this is only when the necessity is urgent and extreme, and the sin we must otherwise commit, evident and certain; and at last our obedience is dispensed withal only for that one time. We may be absent from Church to save the life of our Neighbor, or to quench the firing of his House: but 'twould be a pitiful pretense for the constant neglect of our public

public Prayers, because in the mean time our Neighbor's house may be fir'd, or his life invaded, and so he may stand in need of our help. Tho' this Argument may serve to excuse the omission of something commanded by lawful Authority, in extraordinary cases which very rarely happen: yet to be sure it will not help those, who live in open disobedience to the Laws, only because they are loth to offend those who are not satisfy'd with what is appointed.

But, say they, Scandal is Spiritual Murther: and if we must obey Authority, tho' Scandal follow; then, when Authority commands, we may murder the Soul of our Brother, and destroy him by our meats, for whom Christ dy'd. But I answer, that wearing a Surplice, Kneeling at the Sacrament, &c. will not make Men forsake Christianity; which I have prov'd, is the only proper *Scandalizing* our Brother, which St. Paul charges with the guilt of *Soul murder*. Nay, this argument concludes as strongly against obedience to any other command of God, if a Brother be offended at it; as it do's against submission to Superiors in things lawful. For 'tis not only the Law of Man, but the Law of God also, that is broken by disobedience to Superiors. We cannot be bound to transgress a plain Law of God for fear of some evil that may chance to happen to some others thro' their own fault: because every one is bound to have greater care of his own, than of others Salvation; and consequently to avoid sin in himself, than to prevent it in his Brethren. Nay, as Bishop Sanderson saies, *To allow Men, under pretence that some offence may be taken thereat, to disobey Laws and Constitutions made by those that are in Authority over us, is the next way to cut the*  
*Sinews*

*Sinews of all Authority, and to bring both Magistrates and Laws into contempt ; for what Law ever was made, or can be made so just and reasonable, but some Men or other either did, or might take offense thereat ?*

If it be here asked, whether any Human Authority can make that action cease to be Scandalous, which if done without any such command, had been Scandalous ; I answer, that no Authority can secure, that others shall not be offended by what I do out of obedience to it : but then it frees me from blame, by making that my duty, which if I had otherwise done, might have been uncharitable.

If it be said, that avoiding of Scandal is a main duty of Charity ; and that, if Superiors may appoint, how far I shall shew my Charity towards my Brother's Soul, then an earthly Court may cross the Determinations of the Court of Heaven ; I answer, that here is no crossing the Determinations of God, since it is his express Will that in all lawful things we shou'd obey our Governors ; and he who has made this our Duty, will not lay to our charge the Mischiefs, that may sometimes, without our fault, thro' the folly and peevishness of Men, follow from it. And certainly it is as equal and reasonable, that our Superiors shou'd appoint how far we shall exercise our Charity towards our Brethren ; as it is, that the mistake and prejudice of any private Christians shou'd set Bounds to their Power and Authority ; or that every ignorant and froward Brother shou'd determine, how far we shall be obedient to those whom God has set over us. But farther, duties of Justice are of stricter obligation than duties of Charity. Now obedience to Superiors is a debt ;



and we injure them, if we do not pay it : but avoiding Scandal is a duty of Charity ; which indeed we are obliged to, as far as we can, but not till we have given to every one his due. *It is therefore, saies Bishop Sanderſon, no more lawful for me to disobey the lawful command of a Superior, to prevent thereby the Offence of one or few Brethren ; than it is lawful for me to do one Man wrong, to do another Man a courtesy withal ; or than it is lawful for me to rob the Exchequer to relieve an Hospital.*

If it be reply'd, that tho' the care of not giving Offence be in respect of our Brother but a debt of Charity, yet in regard of God it is a legal debt, since he may, and do's require it as due, and we do him wrong if we disobey him ; I grant indeed, that we are requir'd both to be obedient to Superiors, and to be charitable to our Brother : but then, I say, this is not the Charity which God requires, when I give what is none of my own. A Servant must be Charitable to the Poor according to his ability : but he must not rob his Master to relieve them. Our Superiors only must consider the danger of Scandal ; but we must consider the duty we owe them ; this being a matter wherein we cannot shew our Charity without violating the right of our Superiors.

Thus then it is plain, that they are things merely *indifferent*, not only in their own Nature, but also in respect to us, in the use of which we are obliged to consider the *Weakness* of our Brethren. What is our duty, must be done, tho' Scandal follow it : but in matters, wherein our practise is not determin'd by any command, we ought so to exercise our Liberty, as to avoid (if possible) giving any Offence. 'Tis an undoubted part of Christian Charity, to endeavor by admonition,

hibition, instruction, good example, and by the forbearance of things lawful, at which we foresee our Neighbor out of weakness will be apt to be *Scandaliz'd*, to prevent his falling into any sin or mischief. After this manner do we profess our selves ready to do or forbear any thing in our own power, to gain *Dissenters* to the Church : but we must not omit our duty for it.

I shall only add, that this very rule of yielding to our Brother in things indifferent, ought to have some restrictions ; but I think there are no unalterable Rules to be laid down in this affair. For it being an exercise of Charity, must be determin'd by the measure of Prudence according to Circumstances : and we may as well go about to give certain Rules for Mens Charity in other Cases, and fix the proportion which every Man ought to give of his Estate towards the Relief of the Poor , as positively to tell, how far a Man must deny himself in the use of indifferent things, and forego his own Liberty for the sake of his Brother. *This whole matter* (saies Dr. Hammond, disc. of Scand.) *is to be referr'd to the Christian's Pious Discretion or Prudence ; it being free to him either to abstain, or not to abstain, from any indifferent action (remaining such) according as that Piety and that Prudence shall represent it to be most Charitable and Beneficial to other Mens Souls.*

*Secondly*, To avoid a less *Scandal* being taken by a few, we must not give a greater *Offence*, and of vastly more pernicious consequence, to a much bigger number of Persons. And if this matter were rightly consider'd ; we shou'd soon find our selves much more obliged, upon this account of Scandal, to join with our Church, than to se-

parate from it. For, 1. Our Separation hardens o-  
ther *Dissenters* in their persuasion of the unlawfulness  
of Conformity. For they will think we separate  
upon the same reason with themselves; and this is  
true *Scandalizing* them, or confirming them in an  
evil Course. 2. Whatever Sect we join with, we  
*Offend* all the other Parties; who sometimes speak  
as hardly of one another, as of the Conformists.  
3. Hereby great *Offence* is given to the Conformists.  
For this Separation is a public condemning of the  
Church, and is apt to breed Scruples, distast and  
prejudices, in the well-meaning, but least-knowing  
Members of it. 4. *Scandal* is thereby given to Su-  
periors, by bringing their Laws and Authority in-  
to contempt. And if it be so sinful to Offend a  
little one; what shall we think of Offending a  
Prince, a Parliament, &c! No *Scandal* taken at  
an indifferent thing can be so great, as both the Sin  
and Scandal of confusion, and contempt of Autho-  
rity: 5. Hereby *Scandal* is given to the *Papists*, who  
are harden'd in their own way, because they only  
have Peace and Unity; and this is a mighty temp-  
tation to many wavering Christians to turn *Papists*.  
The *Papists* alwaies hit us in the Teeth with our  
Divisions: whereas by our hearty Uniting with the  
Church of *England*, we may certainly wrest this  
Weapon out of their hands. 6. Separation is *Scan-  
dal* to Religion in general. It prejudices Men a-  
gainst it as an uncertain thing, and matter of end-  
less dispute; when they see what dangerous Quar-  
rels commence from our Religious differences: and  
all the disorders they have caus'd, shall by *some* be  
charg'd upon Christianity it self. Thus our cause-  
less Separations open a wide door to Atheism, and  
all kind of Profaneness and Irreligion.

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*Containing an earnest Persuasive to Communion with the Establish'd Church of England.*

**A**ND now, having shewn the Necessity of maintaining constant Communion with the *Church of England*, and answer'd those Pleas, by which the *Dissenters* endeavor to excuse their Separation from her; nothing remains, but that I add an earnest Persuasive to the practise of that, which I have prov'd to be a Christian Duty. I beseech you therefore with all the Earnestness that becomes a Matter of so great Importance, and with all the Kindness and Tenderness that becomes a Christian, to *suffer the Word of Exhortation*, and duly consider what I offer to you.

I have shewn you in the *first Chap.* of this Discourse, that *Nothing but sinful Terms of Communion can justify a Separation*; and therefore you must charge our Church with sinful Terms of Communion, or else you cannot possibly defend your practise. Suppose that there were some things in our Constitution, that might be contriv'd better; yet every defect or suppos'd Corruption in a Church is not warrant enough to tear the Church in pieces. The question is not, whether there be any thing in our Constitution, which a Man cou'd wish to be alter'd: but whether any thing unlawful be appointed, which will make an alteration not only desirable, but necessary; and whether you are bound to withdraw, till such alteration be made. We separate from the Church of *Rome*, because She has corrupted the main Principles of Religion, and requires her Members to join in those Cor-

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ruptions : but this charge cannot be fasten'd upon the Church of England, and therefore Separation from her must be unlawful.

Mr. Calvin (a) saies, that *wherever the Word of God is duly preach'd, and reverently attended to, and the true use of the Sacraments kept up, there is the plain appearance of a true Church, whose Authority no Man may safely despise, or reject its Admonitions, or resist its Counsels, or set at nought its Disciplin, much less separate from it, and violate its Unity. For that our Lord has so great regard to the Communion of his Church, that he accounts him an Apostate from his Religion, who obstinately separates from any Christian Society, which keeps up the true Ministry of the Word and Sacraments; that such a separation is a denial of God and Christ; and that it is a dangerous and pernicious Temptation, so much as to think of separating from such a Church, the Communion whereof is never to be rejected, so long as it continues in the true Use of the Word and Sacraments, This is as plain and full a Determination of the Case, as if he had particularly design'd it against your own practise. Nay, the Ministers of New England tell you, that to separate from a Church for some Evil only conceiv'd, or indeed in the Church, which might and shou'd be tolerated, and heal'd with a Spirit of Meekness, and of which the Church is not yet convinc'd, tho' perhaps your self be; for this or the like Reasons to withdraw from public Communion in Word, Seals or Censures, is unlawful and sinful.*

If you say, that the Governors may as well come down to you, by forbearing what you dislike, as you come up to the Law, by doing what it requires; I beseech you to consider, whether our

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(a) Institut. lib. 4. Sect. 10, 11, 12.

Case will bear this Wantoness, and whether such Expressions be consistent with your duty. I do not think it hard, I confess, to make out the prudence of their Determinations: but I think it hard, that a *Public Rule* shou'd not be thought Reason enough to justify things of this sort, and to oblige the People to Compliance without more ado. Certainly there is no prospect of Union, till Men learn Humility and Modesty, and are contented to be Govern'd. What is the duty of Superiours in our Case, I cannot determin: but sure I am, that a Change (tho' in things perfectly indifferent) is no indifferent thing; and 'tis infinite odds, but if once they begin to change without necessity, there will never be an end of changing.

But farther, I desire you to consider, that the most eminent even of your own Writers, do flatly condemn your Separation from the *Church of England*. For they acknowledge her to be a true Church, and (b) hold, that *You are not to separate farther from a true Church, than the things you separate for, are unlawful, or conceiv'd so to be*; that is, they hold that you ought to go as far as you can, and do what you lawfully may, towards Communion with it. They (c) hold also, that *You are not to separate from a Church for unlawful things, if the things accounted unlawful, are not of so heinous a Nature*

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(b) See Burroughs's *Iren.* p. 184. *Vind. of Presb. Gov.* Brinly's *Arraignm.* p. 16, 31. Corbet's *Plea for Lay Com.* Newcomen's *Iren.* Epist. to the Read. Ball's *Tryal*, c. 7. *Jerubbaal*, p. 28, 30. Throughton's *Apol.* p. 107. Robinson of *the Lawful. of Hear.* p. ult. (c) See Tombes's *Theod.* Answer to Pref. Sect. 23. Blake's *Vind.* c. 31. Brinly's *Arraignm.* p. 50. Noyes's *Temple Mens.* p. 78. Owen's *Evangel. Love*, p. 76. Cotton on the 1 Epist. of John, p. 156. Baxter's *Cure*, dir. 5. *Vines on the Sacram.* p. 239. Corbet's *Acc. of Sep.* p. 103. *Jerubbaal*, p. 12.

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as to withdraw a Church, or are not impos'd as necessary Terms of Communion. Nay, they (d) produce several arguments to prove, that Defects in Worship, if not essential, are no just reason for withdrawing from it. 1. Because to break off Communion for such Defects, wou'd be to look after a greater Perfection, than this present state will admit of. 2. Our Savior and his Apostles did not separate from defective Churches. 3. Christ doth still hold Communion with defective Churches, and so ought we. 4. To separate from such defective Churches, wou'd destroy all Communion. Nor, 5. Is it at all warranted in Scripture. Nor, 6. Is it necessary; because a Person may communicate in the Worship, without partaking in those Corruptions. Nay, 7. They urge, that 'tis a duty to join with a defective Worship, where we can have no better.

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(d) See Brownists Confess. art. 36. Jenkin on Jude, v. 19. Allen's Life, p. 3. Engl. Remembrancer, Sermon. 4. 14, 16. Ball's Tryal, p. 74, &c. 132, &c. 159, &c. 308. Platform of Discipl. c. 14. Sect. 8. Hilderham on John, Lett. 35, 38. Brian's Dwell. with God, p. 293, 294. Bradshaw's Unreason. of Sep. p. 103, 104. Non-Conf. no Schismat. p. 15. Cawdry's Indep. a great Schism, p. 192, 193. Owen's Evangel. Love, c. 3. Throughton's Apol. p. 100. Vines on the Sacram. p. 242. Crofton's hard way to Heaven, p. 36. Noyes's Temp. Meas. p. 78, 89. Davenport's Reply, p. 281. Cotton on 1 Epist. of John, p. 156. Calamy's Godly Man's Ark, Epist. Ded. Allen's Godly Man's Portion, p. 122, 127. Bain's on Ephes. 2. 15. Contin. Morn. Exer. Sermon. 16. Baxter's Cure, dir. 35. Def. of his Cure, part 1. p. 47. & part 2. p. 171. Burroughs's Iren. c. 23. Morton's Memorial, p. 78, &c. Blake's Viind. c. 31. Tombes's Theodul. answer to Pref. Sect. 25. Conf. Savoy, p. 12, 13. Calamy's Door of truth open'd, p. 7. Corbet's N. C. Plea, p. 6. Robinson's Lawful. of Hear. p. 19, 23. Nye's Case of great & pres. Use, p. 10, 16, 18.

And

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And as for our Injunctions in particular, they (e) own them to be tolerable; and what no Church is without, more or less; that they are not sufficient to hinder Communion; and that they are but few. Nay farther, several of the old *Non-Conformists* zealously oppos'd Separation from the Church of *England*, and join'd with it to their dying Day, tho' they cou'd not conform as *Ministers*: and several of the Modern *Non-Conformists* have written for Communion with it, and have in print (f) declar'd it to be their Duty and Practise.

But besides the Sentiments of your own Teachers, there is greater Authority to be urged against you. For in those things, wherein you differ from us, you are condemn'd by the Practise of the Whole Catholic Church for fifteen hundred Years together; and surely this consideration ought to prevail with modest and peaceable Men. This might afford a large field for Discourse: but I shall only hint at a few Particulars.

I. We desire you to produce an Instance of any settled Church, that was without *Episcopacy*, till *Calein's* time. The greatest Opposers of *Episcopacy* have been forced to grant, that it obtain'd in the Church within a few Years after the *Apostolic* Age; and we are sure we can carry it higher, even to the Apostles themselves. There are but two Passages, and both of them not till the latter end of the fourth Century, that may seem to question

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(e) See Lett. Min. of Old Engl. p. 12, 13. Bryan's Dwell with God, p. 311. Throughton's Apol. c. 7. p. 68. Owen's Peace-Off. p. 17. Misch. of Impos. Epist. Ded. (f) See Baxter's Sacril. Desert. p. 75. Mr. J. Allen's Life, p. 111. Collins's Doctr. of Schism, p. 64. Lye's Reas. Account, &c. Hickman's Bonaf. Vap. p. 113. Baxter's Plea for Peace, p. 240.



*Episcopal*. Authority. That of (g) *St. Jerom*, when improv'd to the utmost that it is capable of, only intimates *Episcopacy* not to be of *Apostolical* Institution. And very clear it is to those that are acquainted with *St. Jerom's* Writings, that he often wrote in haste, and did not always weigh things exactly, and forgot at one time what he had said at another; that many Expressions fell from him in the heat of Disputation, according to the warmth and eagerness of his Temper; and that he was particularly chafed into this Assertion by the fierce opposition of the *Deacons* at *Rome*, who began to Usurp upon, and overtop the *Presbyters*; which tempted him to magnify and extol their Place and Dignity, as anciently equal to the *Episcopal* Office, and as containing in it the common Rights and Privileges of Priesthood. For at other times, when he wrote with cooler thoughts about him, he do's plainly and frequently enough assert the Authority of Bishops over *Presbyters*; and did himself constantly live in Communion with, and Subjection to Bishops. The other passage is that of *Aerius*, who held indeed that a Bishop and a *Presbyter* differ'd nothing in Order, Dignity, or Power. But he embrac'd this false opinion merely thro' Envy, being vext to see that his Companion *Eustatbius* had gotten the Bishoprick of *Sebastia*, which himself had aim'd at. This made him furious, and talk extravagantly: but the Church immediately branded him for an *Heretic*, and drove him and his Followers out of all Churches, and from all Cities and Villages. And *Epiphanius*, who was his Contemporary, represents him as very little better

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(g) In *Epist. ad Tit. cap. 1.*

than a Mad-man. 2. We desire you to name any Church, that did not constantly use *Forms of Prayer* in public Worship; but of this I have discours'd at large in the *Third* Chapter. 3. Shew us any Church, that did not alwaies observe *Festivals* in Commemoration of *Christ* and his *Saints*. 4. Name any one Church since the *Apostles* times, that had not its *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, as many (if not more) in number, and as liable to *Exception*, as those that we use. Nay, there are few things (if any at all) requir'd by us, which were not in use in the best Ages of Christianity. Nay farther, I cou'd easily (*b*) shew, that most (if not all) the *Usages* of our Church, are either practis'd in *Foreign Churches*, or at least allow'd of by the most *Eminent* and *Learned Divines* of the *Reformation*.

Consider also, that *Separation* is the ready way to bring in *Popery*, as *Mr. Baxter* (*i*) has prov'd. The Church of *England* is the great *Bulwark* against *Popery*, and therefore the *Papists* have us'd all possible *Means* to destroy it, and particularly by *Divisions*. They have attempted to pull it down by pretended *Protestant* hands; and have made use of you to bring about their own designs. In order hereunto they have upon all *Occasions* strenuously promoted the *Separation*, and mixt themselves with you; they have put on every *Shape*, that they might the better follow the common *Outcry* against the Church as *Popish* and *Antichristian*; spurring you on to call for a more pure and spiritual way of *Worship*, and to clamor for *Liberty* and *Toleration*; as foreseeing,

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(*b*) See *Durel's View of the Govern.* &c. and *Sprint's Cas-*  
*stand. Anglic.* p. 123, &c. (*i*) *Defence*, p. 27, 52.

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that when they had subverted all Order, and beaten you out of all sober Principles, you must be necessitated at last to center in the Communion of the *Romish* Church. This trade they began almost in the very infancy of the Reformation; as appears by the (k) stories of *Comin* and *Heath*: and no doubt they held on the same in succeeding Times; as appears (besides all other Instances) by (l) *Bellarini's* Letter concerning the best Way of managing the *Popish* Interest in *England* upon the Restoration of *King Charles the II.* For therein it was advis'd to foment Fears and Jealousies of the King and Bishops; to asperse the Bishops and Ministers of the Church of *England*, and to represent its Doctrine and Worship as coming too near the Church of *Rome*; to second the factious in promoting an Indulgence, and to endeavor, that the Trade and Treasure of the Nation might be engross'd between themselves and other discontented Parties.

We know how restless and industrious the *Romish* Faction has ever been; and the only visible security we have against the prevailing of it, lies in the firm Union of *Protestants*. And therefore I conjure you by all the kindness, which you pretend for the *Protestant* Religion, heartily to join in Communion with us. For the Common Enemy waits all Opportunities, and stands ready to enter at those Breaches, which you are Making. You might condemn the Rashness of your own Counsels, and lament it, it may be, when it wou'd be too late; if you shou'd see *Popery* erected upon the ruins of that Church, which you your selves

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(k) *Foxes* and *Firebrands*. (l) See *Stillingfleet's* Unreasonableness of Separation, *Pref.* p. 20, &c.

had overthrown. It wou'd be a sad addition to your Miseries, if the Guilt and Shame of them too might be laid to your charge. With what remorse wou'd you reflect upon it (when the heat of your Passion was over) if the *Protestant* Profession shou'd be farther endanger'd, and the Agents of *Rome* get greater advantages daily by those Distractions, which have been secretly managed by them, but openly carried on and maintain'd by your selves? With what face wou'd you look, to see the *Papists*, not only triumphing over you, but mocking and deriding you, for being so far impos'd upon by their Cunning, as to be made the immediate instruments of your own Ruin? Therefore I beseech you not to act, as if you were prosecuting the Designs of the *Conclave*; and proceed just as if you were govern'd by the Decrees of the pretended Infallible Chair. You may be asham'd to look so much like Tools in the hands of the Jesuits; when you suffer your selves to be guided by those Measures which they had taken, and talk and do as they wou'd have you, as if you were immediately inspir'd from *Rome*.

: To These arguments I must add another, which I hope will prevail with you; viz. I cannot see, how you can avoid being self-condemn'd, if you continue in your Separation. For certain it is, that most of you have been at our Churches, and receiv'd the Sacrament there; and I am not willing to think, that you acted against your Consciences, or did it merely to secure a gainful Office, or a place of Trust, or to escape the Lash and Penalty of the Law. These are Ends so very Vile and Sordid; this is so horrible a Prostitution of the Holy Sacrament, the most venerable My-  
stery

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tery of our Religion; so deliberate a Way of sinning, even in the most solemn act of Worship; that I can hardly suspect any shou'd be guilty of it, but Men of Profligate and Atheistical Minds. But then, why do's not the same Principle, that brings you at one Time, bring you at another? Why can we never have your Company, but when Punishment or Advantage prompts you to it? We blame the *Papists* for dispensing with Oaths, and receiving the Sacrament to serve a turn, and to advance the Interest of their Cause; but God forbid, that so heavy a Charge shou'd ever lie at the Doors of *Protestants*; and especially those who wou'd be thought most to abhor *Papist* practices; and who wou'd take it ill to be accounted not to make as much, if not more, Conscience of their Waies, than other Men.

Now I beseech you to reason a little; If our Communion be sinful, why did you enter into it? If it be lawful, why do you forsake it? Is it not that which the Commands of Authority have ty'd upon you; which Commands you are bound to submit to, *not only for Wrath but also for Conscience sake*? Are not the Peace and Unity of the Church, things that ought greatly to sway with all Sober, Humble and Considering Christians? *If it be possible*, saies the Apostle, *and as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all Men*, Rom. 12. 18. And shall Peace be broken only in the Church, where it ought to be kept most intire? and that by those who acknowledge it to be *possible*, and within their Power? Are you satisfy'd in your Conscience to join in Communion with us; and will you not do it for the sake of the Church of God? Will you refuse to do what is lawful, and (as the Case stands)

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hands) necessary in order to Peace; only because Authority Commands, and has made it your Duty. Let me intreat you, as you love your dear Redeemer, to do as much for the Peace of *His Church*, as for a Vote or Office; and to come to the Sacrament of his Body and Blood as *Christians*, and not as *Politicians*.

Let these great truths sink into your hearts; and consider, I beseech you, what you are doing. Be well advis'd, before you venture upon that, which makes you guilty of a sin of the blackest Nature. Be not blinded by Prejudice or Passion, nor take Opinions upon trust: but search and examin into the truth. Consciences truly tender, are willing and desirous to embrace all Opportunities of Resolution; and are ready to kiss the hand, that wou'd bring them better Information. They will not neglect, much less thrust from them, the means that might ease them of their Doubts and Scruples. But it looks very odly, that so many of you are no more concern'd to understand the true State of the Church of *England*, and the Nature and Reasons of her Constitutions; that so few of you care to confer with those that are able to instruct you: but cry out, You are satisfy'd already; nay, some of you, to my knowledge, when desir'd to propose your Scruples, in order to the giving you Satisfaction, have plainly and absolutely refus'd to do it. There is little reason to believe, that such Persons have ever read and examin'd, what the Church of *England* has to say for her self. Are there not many, that not only Scruple, but rail at the Book of *Common Prayer*, that yet never heard it, nor perhaps ever read it, in all their Lives? And if this be not to speak evil of what they know not, I cannot tell what is.

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You generally forbear our Public Worship, upon no other ground, but because you prefer your own arbitrary way before it: whereas I may take the confidence to affirm, that our *Liturgy* was made and revis'd with that Prudence and Moderation, that Care and Circumspection, that there is nothing now extant in that kind, that has been compos'd with greater Wisdom and Piety. If I shou'd compare it with the Performances in the other way (not to mention the many indecent, incoherent, irreverent Expressions, to say no worse that might be collected) let any *Extempore* Prayer, made by the ablest of those, that magnify that way and despise ours, be taken in writing and publish'd to the World; and I am confident, that one Man, without any great pains, may find more things really exceptionable in that single Prayer, in a short time; than the several Parties of *Dissenters*, with all the Diligence they have hitherto us'd, have been able to discover in the whole Service of our Church, in more than an hundred Years. And yet some of you, that seek industriously for Scruples in the *Common Prayer*, will readily join in *Extempore* Prayers without any Scruple. This is such Partiality and unequal Dealing, as cannot easily be excus'd.

'Tis true, the early Prepossession of a contrary Opinion, the powerful Prejudices of Education, and implicit and unexamin'd belief of what their Guides and Leaders teach them, have a strange force upon the minds of Men; so that in effect they no more doubt of the truth and goodness of the Cause they are engag'd in, than they question the Articles of their Creed. These and the like are very dangerous and usual Mistakes, that do frequently proceed from the Prevalence of our Passions.

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Passions. Now the first step towards Concord in Opinion and Affections, is to dispose your Minds to a calm and Teachable Temper; to be alwaies ready to acknowledge the force of an Argument, tho' it contradict your persuasions never so much. Wherefore I do once and again intreat you, that laying aside all Pride, Partiality and Self conceit; you wou'd not *think more highly of your selves*, and of your own way, *than you ought to think*. Truth makes the easiest entrance into Modest and Humble Minds. *The Meek will be guide in judgment, the Meek will be teach his Way*. The Spirit of God never rests upon the proud Man.

But especially you must be very careful, that *Secular Interest* did not either engage you in the Separation at the beginning, or provoke you to continue in it. And there is the more reason to put you upon this Inquiry, not only because *Secular Ends* are very apt to mix with, and shelter themselves under the shadow of Religion; but because this has been an old Artifice, made use of to promote Separation. Thus the *Donatists* upheld their Separation, and kept their Party fast together, by trading only within themselves, and employing none but those that wou'd be of their side; nay, and sometimes hiring Persons to be Baptiz'd into their Party, as *Crispin* did the People of *Mappalia*. And how evident the same Policy is among our modern *Quakers*, is too notorious to need either Proof or Observation. Whoever looks into the Nation, must needs take notice how Interests are form'd, and by what methods Parties and Factions are kept up; how many thousands of the poorer sort of you depend upon this or that Man for your Work and Livelyhood; how many of you depend upon others for your Trade,

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whom accordingly those Men can readily Command, and do produce to give Votes and increase Parties on all Public Occasions; and what little encouragement any Man finds from you, that deserts you, and comes over to the Church of *England*. Let me beseech you therefore impartially to examin your selves; and to search, whether a wordly spirit be not at the bottom of your Zeal and Stiffness. These, I confess, are Designs too base and sordid to be own'd above-board: but *Be not deceiv'd, God is not mock'd; Man looks to the outward Appearance, but God looks to the Heart.* If you hope to gain and grow rich by your Separation; if you are asham'd or scorn to retract your Opinions; if you imagin you have more *Light* than the first Reformers, when indeed you are very ignorant; if you cannot endure to be oppos'd in any thing; if you murmur and repine at your Governors when they require your Obedience, where you are unwilling to pay it; these are Signs, that your affections are turbulent and unruly. And while you are thus dispos'd, you can never be assur'd, but that Covetousness, Pride, and Impatience, might be the greatest Motives, that induc'd you to make a Separation, and the strongest Arguments that you have to maintain it.

But above all things, I beseech you for the sake of your precious Souls, to *consider the Heinous Nature and Guilt of Schism*; which is nothing else but the separating your selves from a true Church, without any just occasion given. I doubt, you are not sufficiently sensible, how much you oppose that Spirit of Peace and Brotherly Love, which shou'd diffuse it self thro' the whole Body of Christian People; when you suppose every  
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flender Pretence enough to justify your departing from us, and setting up a Church against a Church. The Old *Non-Conformists* charg'd the People to be as tender of Church-Division, as they were of Drunkeness, Whoredom, or any other enormous Crimes; whereas you seem to think it a matter almost indifferent, and that you are left to your own choice to join with what Society of Christians you please. Which giddy principle, if it shou'd prevail, wou'd certainly throw us into an absolute Confusion; and introduce all the Errors and Mischiefs, that can be imagin'd. But our Blessed Lord founded but one Universal Church; and when he was ready to be crucify'd for us, and pray'd not for the Apostles alone, but *for them also that shou'd believe in him thro' their Word*; one of the last Petitions which he then put up, amongst diverse others to the same Purpose, was *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the World may believe that thou hast sent me, John 17. 21.* 'Tis plain, this was to be a visible *Unity*, that might be taken notice of in the World, and so become an Inducement to move Men to embrace the Christian Faith. Peace and Amity, and a good Correspondence betwixt the several Members of which they consist, is the only Beauty, Strength and Security of all Societies; and on the contrary, the nourishing of Animosities, and running into opposite Parties and Factions, do's mightily weaken, and by degrees almost unavoidably draw on the Ruin and Dissolution of any Community, whether Civil or Sacred. Concord and Union therefore will be as necessary for the Preservation of the Church, as of the State, It has been known by too sad an Experience, as

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well in ours, as other Ages, what a pernicious Influence the Intestine Broils and Quarels among Christians have had. They have been the great stumbling-block to *Jews, Turks, and Heathens*, and the main hindrance of their Conversion; they have made some among our selves to become Doubtful and Sceptical in their Religion; they have led others into many dangerous Errors, that shake the very Foundations of our Faith; and some they have tempted to cast off the Natural sense they had of the Deity, and embolden'd them to a profess'd Atheism. Therefore as you wou'd avoid the hardening of Men in Atheism and Infidelity, and making the Prayer of our dying Savior (as much as in you lies) wholly ineffectual: you ought to be exceeding cautious, that you do not wilfully Divide his Holy Catholick Church.

You are often warn'd of this; and how many Arguments do's St Paul heap together to persuade you to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace? One Body and one Spirit, even as you are call'd in one Hope of your Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all; Eph. 4. 3, 4, 5, 6.* And how pathetically do's the same Apostle exhort you again to the same thing, by all the mutual Endearments that Christianity affords? *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind; Phil. 2. 1, 2.* These vehement Exhortations to Peace and Concord, do strictly oblige you to hold Communion with that Church, which requires nothing but what is lawful of you. They that have the same Articles of Faith,  
and

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and hope to meet in the same Heaven, thro' the Merits of the same Lord ; shou'd not be afraid to come into the same Assemblies, and join seriously in sending up the same Prayers, and participating of the same Sacraments. Besides the many strict Precepts and other strong Obligations which you have to this Duty, our Savior dy'd, *that he might gather together in One, the Children of God that were scatter'd abroad*; John 11. 52. And do you not then contradict this end of his Death, in setting those at variance, whom he intended to Unite? Nay, may you not be said to *Crucify the Son of God afresh*, by mangling and dividing a sound and healthful part of that Body, of which he owns himself to be the Head? If indeed our Church did require you to profess any false Doctrine, or to do any thing contrary to any divine Command ; you were bound in such instances to withdraw from her : but since her Doctrine, Disciplin and Worship are good and lawful ; you are indispenfably engaged to join in Communion with her. For as I said before, and it cannot be inculcated too often, *Nothing but the Unlawfulness of joining with us can make a Separation Lawful.*

Let it pity you at least to see the ghastly wounds, that are still renew'd by the continuance of our Divisions. Be persuaded to have some Compassion on a Bleeding Church, that is ready to faint, and in imminent danger of being made a prey to her Enemies, by the unnatural Heats and Animosities of those, that shou'd Support and Defend her. Why shou'd you leave her thus Desolate and Forlorn, when her present Exigencies require your most Cordial Assistance? If the condition of her Communion were such as God's  
Laws

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Laws did not allow ; you might forsake her that had forsaken him : but since this cannot be Objected against her ; since she exacts no *forbidden* thing of you, you ought to strengthen her Hands by an unanimous Agreement. Since the Substantials of Religion are the same, let not the Circumstances of External Order and Disciplin be any longer an Occasion of Difference amongst us. And so shall we bring Glory to God, a happy Peace to a Divided Church, a considerable Security to the *Protestant* Religion ; and probably defeat the subtil Practises of *Rome*, which now stands gaping after All, and hopes by our Distractions to repair the Losses she has suffer'd by the Reformation.

May the Wisdom of Heaven make all wicked Purposes unsuccessful ; and the Blessed Spirit of Love heal all our Breaches, and prosper the charitable Endavors of those that follow after  
P E A C E. *Amen.*

T H E E N D.

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